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OCTOBER 1997
NO. 19

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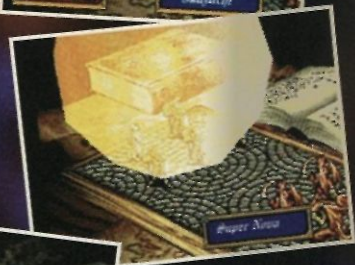


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'Mech My Day

This issue's cover story focuses on a trading card game designed by Richard Garfield. With tournament support from the DCI, this TCG has developed a loyal following, complete with dedicated resources on the Internet and regular articles in *The Duelist*. While I could be talking about you-know-what, I'm not. The game in question is **BattleTech**. (Hopefully, the giant 'Mech on the cover was a clue.)

Living in the shadow of its "older brother," **BattleTech** doesn't always get the recognition it deserves. This is why we've chosen this issue to spotlight the game. With reviews, strategy articles, a card checklist, even a "What's New?" comic, we want to show off all the world of 3058 has to offer.

news, the reality is that the demands of readers dictate the amount of coverage devoted to each game in *The Duelist*. Nevertheless, we plan to take opportunities—such as this issue—to explore some of the games that receive less attention.

While I'm on the topic, I'd like to take a paragraph or two to talk about *The Duelist* and all the other TCGs that haven't yet sold over two billion cards. We get a lot of inquiries from players wanting to know why they don't see more of their favorite games. We've been tracking exactly which games are the most popular among our readers, and we're going to make a concentrated effort to investigate them.

Also, in an attempt to maximize reader interest, we're doing more strategy articles and less reviews. The reasoning is that a player interested in a game wants to learn what makes the game tick rather than read a simple recap of the premise. By presenting strategy articles, we're allowing a prospective player to get a glimpse of a game's inner workings while providing existing players with useful material.

So, as you leaf through this issue, take a chance and read some of those "other" articles. You might discover a game you like just as much as...well, you know.

Mark Rosewater
MARK ROSEWATER
Editor in Chief

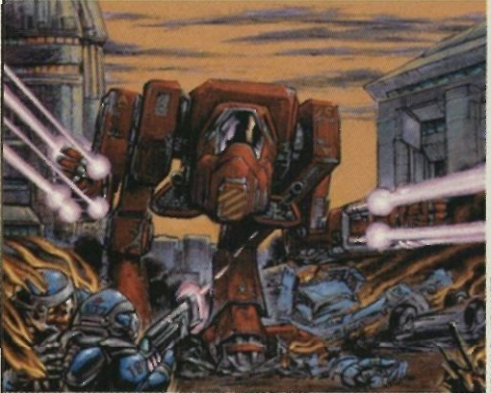
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KELLY D. KRANTZ

For those of you who play that "other" Wizards of the Coast trading card game, this issue has plenty of material on *that* game as well. Rest assured, we haven't forgotten why most readers pick up *The Duelist*. But we hope you take this opportunity to learn more about the game of massive, battling war machines. With numerous roleplaying, computer, and arcade games supporting **BattleTech**, I think you'll find that the game introduces you to a rich and exciting world.

For those who already play **BattleTech**, this issue provides some extra coverage. While we are dedicated to bringing you the latest **BattleTech**

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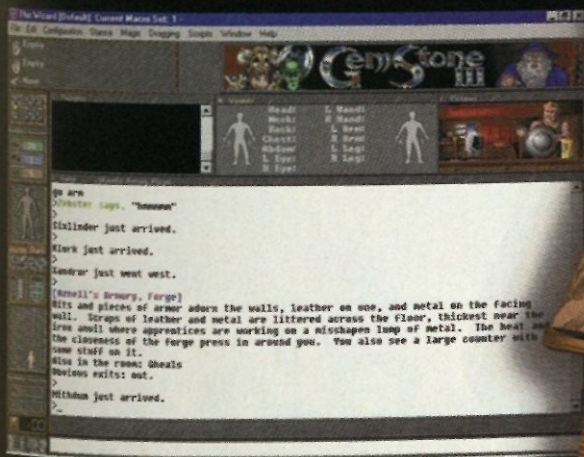
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ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

his Irish Eyes Are Smilin'



Charles Gillespie. By his own admission, his head's too big, his body's too short, and he probably smokes too much. But ask Charles Gillespie to paint a mechanized war machine and he doesn't hesitate, diving into the project with reckless abandon. It's territory he knows well.

A 1991 graduate of the Harrow College Art School, a division of London's Polytechnic University, Gillespie is best known as a comic book artist. Since graduating, he's found his niche working for British comic book titles such as *Judge Dredd* and *2000 AD*. He credits British comic book artists Glenn Fabry and Steve Sampson as two of his influences.

"My degree was in illustration," says the thirty-year-old native of Londonderry, Northern Ireland. "So the curriculum I followed was fine-art oriented. But I was always more interested in doing comic books. They tried very hard to get rid of me—I guess I wasn't pretentious enough for them."

Lately, he's been dabbling in card-art illustration. Still residing in Londonderry, his debut with Wizards of the Coast occurred last summer with *Mirage*. He painted six cards for the stand-alone expansion, followed by work for *Fifth Edition* (four cards), *Portal* (five), and *Weatherlight* (four).

His most recent work, however, appears in *Mercenaries*, the latest expansion for the *BattleTech* TCG. He illustrated eleven cards for the initial *BattleTech* release, then

Painted two cards for *Counterstrike*, and three more for *Mercenaries*. His assignment for this month's cover was to reinterpret "Gunslinger," a powerful, eighty-five-ton 'Mech featured in *Mercenaries*.

"It's the same as usual," he says. "They send me a picture of the robot and say 'Draw a new robot.' The drawings they send me are right from the *BattleTech* manual, so they're a bit outdated. I like to paint robots with muscles. That always turns me on."

Magic's Top Gun



Tom Chanpheng.

Twenty-year-old Tom Chanpheng has an easy name to remember. And since his victorious romp at the '96 *Magic* World Championships, his name is even harder to forget.

A student at the Queensland University of Technology, Chanpheng's emergence in *Magic* circles could easily be called meteoric. He didn't even pick up the game until March 1995. The very next year, as a member of Team Australia, he battled his way through various play formats during the Worlds individual competition to find himself among the Top 8 and rising.

Initially, his hopes weren't set on the top spot, but he continued to roll. "My expectations got higher and higher," he recalls. "I was doing pretty good, so I was thinking about making Top 16...then maybe Top 8...then maybe Top 4 so I could qualify for next year's Worlds."

During the final day, Chanpheng blazed a trail like few before him. First he knocked off Kansas City's Matt Place, 2-1, in the quarterfinals. Next he shut out '95 Worlds semifinalist Henry Stern of Los Angeles, 3-0. Then he blasted Pro Tour mainstay Mark Justice of Utah, 3-0, in the championship match.

"It was a dream come true," says Chanpheng. "It was a dream just going to the Worlds and doing so well against so many excellent players. It was amazing."

For his efforts, he flew back to Brisbane \$26,000 richer. To recount the rising star's march to glory, turn to page 70. It's a ride few have taken. ♣

COMING IN ISSUE #20

- ▶ The *Duelist* Invitational Contest: Win a free trip for you and a guest to Rio de Janeiro!
- ▶ Complete coverage of *Tempest*, *Magic's* latest stand-alone expansion, including player's guide and card list.
- ▶ Quinton Hoover's "Whispers from the Muse" art print, suitable for framing.
- ▶ Free "Aliens Predator" card from HarperPrism.

ON SALE OCTOBER 8

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Editor in Chief: Mark Rosewater
Managing Editor: Terry Melia
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Style Editor: Robert Dalton
Contributing Editors: Melody Alder, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
Additional Editors: Beverly Marshall Saling, Britt Scott
Content Reviewers: Shawn F. Carnes, Charlie Catino, Glenn Elliott, Mike Elliott, William Jockusch, Jim Lin, Joel Mick, Chris Page, Paul Paterson, Bill Rose, Henry Stern, Jonathan Tweet, Tom Wylie

Contributing Writers: Wolfgang Baur, Jason Carl, Shawn F. Carnes, Andy Collins, Jeff Donais, Glenn Elliott, Jeff Franzmann, Richard Garfield, Robert Hahn, Cory Herndon, Aaron Long, Mike Long, Beth Moursund, Paul Paterson, Michael G. Ryan, Mike Selinker, Henry Stern, Allen Varney, Jon Wilkie, Tom Wylie

Art Director: Shauna Wolf Narciso
Designer: Sue Ann Harkey
Contributing Artists and Photographers: Theo Anderson, Steve Bloch, Maria Cabardo, Doug Chafee, Audrey Corman, Amel Emric, Scott M. Fischer, Phil Foglio, Kimball Hall, Richard Hescoc, Tom Hussey, Mike Jackson, Janine Johnston, Kelly D. Krantz, Bob Macklin, Corey Macourek, Ted Naifeh, Eric Nancarrow, Terese Nielsen, Alan Rabinowitz, Adam Rex, Hans Riefenrath, Rex Rystedt, Pete Venters, Christina Wald, Matt Wilson
Cover Artist: Charles Gillespie

Production Manager: Judy Smitha (425) 204-7229
Advertising Sales Manager: Bob Henning (425) 204-7262, <bob@wizards.com>
Ad Traffic Manager: Judy Smitha
Magic Liaison: Shirley Carlson
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This Issue Brought to You By: the number 23; aluminum bats; Bhagwan's Best; Birthday Puzzles; 360 Reviews; Sushi with Ken and Dan at Kitaro; Jake and Elwood; Emily's Vitamin P; the combined theme songs of "I Dream of Jeannie" and "Bewitched"; the 25th Anniversary of Pink Flamingos; "Janky" decks at Pro Tour—New York; and the worst wine in Westchester County.

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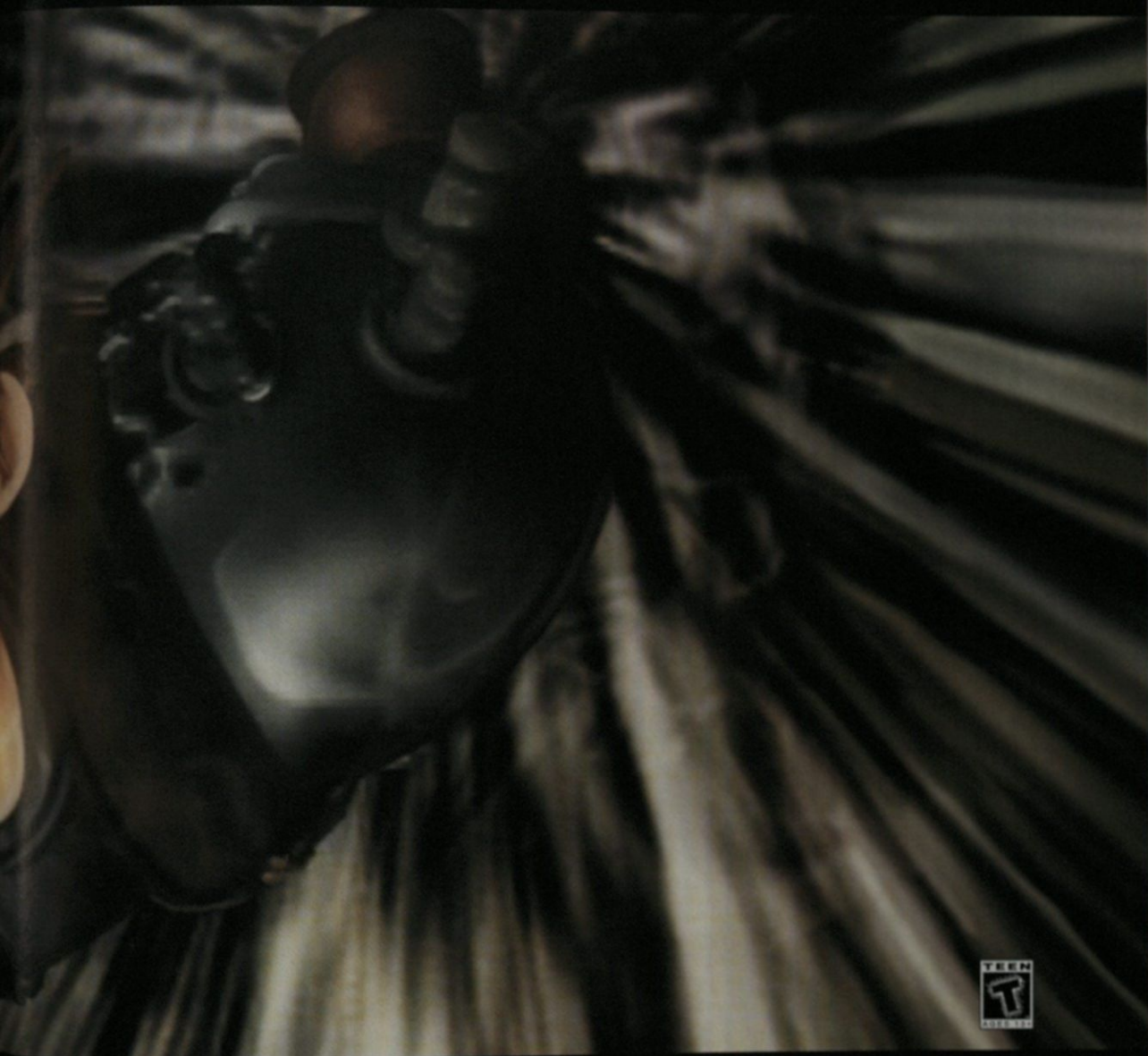
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LETTERS

Not Enough Braves

Sometimes you just can't win.

Looking through my vast collection of Magic cards, one can spot an interesting trend: Merfolk of every shape and size, but no Lord of Atlantis. Dozens of Zombies, all lacking a Master to call their own. A horde of Goblins, all gloomy, for they have no King to worship.

Imagine my surprise when, upon opening my

very first *Mirage* booster, I found a Zuberi, Golden Feather just asking to be put into a griffin deck. The other griffins weren't rare, so I assumed I would easily find them in starters and boosters.

Seven starters and eighteen boosters later, what do I have? Two more Zuberi, Golden Feathers. Not one freaking griffin to use them with.

Can you Mind Bend a Zuberi to read "Kobolds" instead of "Griffins?"

Sigh.

Desmond Coish
Western Bay,
Newfoundland, Canada

Excuse Me?

I've been an avid fan of Magic since the age of *Antiquities*, and have become what most would term a "Ms. Suitcase." Early on I was becoming overwhelmed by such cards as Atog, Erg Raiders, and Argothian Pixies. Sure they had their uses, but by the time I had accumulated ten or more of any common card I was hard pressed not to use the excess as kindling. Not too many people played the game, at that time, and often I found myself unable to play Magic for want of an opponent.

Then it hit me, how to reduce my infestation of Craw Wurms AND find people to play with. It really wasn't that hard. Simply by handing out gifts of Magic decks (containing all those extra nuisances), I was able to both trim my collection and ensure a ready supply of opponents. Happily, I have found that no matter where I

go, all it takes is a few Magic cards doled out and you never lack for opposition again. So let this be a word of advice to all those Suitcases out there. What good is a monopoly on Magic cards when you have no one to challenge that killer deck?

Aurora Cameron
Ozark, Alabama

New Format Needed

It seems in the large scheme of things that a great divide separates players that started pre-*Dark* and those that started afterwards. Many players (although I speak only for myself) that started the game with *Fourth Edition* and *Fallen Empires* will never reach the level of "veteran players" without spending more money than a "game" is worth.

Now that Wizards is churning out expansion set after expansion set there is little or no time to actually play with the cards once they are acquired. Some new environment needs to be created that accommodates "mid-range" players. Something that doesn't have the "power hungry nine" or abusive cards of the past, but takes advantage of Magic's more conser-

vative and well-balanced play seen from *Fallen Empires* on.

2Lt. Brian P. Lane
Bamberg, Germany

Complications Have Set In

When I think about what it was like to play Magic, I remember playing a simple game where the rules were clear and everyone eagerly awaited the release of the next expansion. When I look at Magic now, I see a game so complicated that I'm surprised anyone can understand it at all. I also see expansions shooting out so quickly that nobody has a chance to get acquainted with one before the next one comes out—not to mention that the new expansion completely changes the game.

Magic seems to be getting more and more complicated. I believe that if this continues, many players are going to switch to a different, more stable TCG where there won't be such turmoil.

Jesse Herrington
Van Burn, Missouri

Correction

Teeuwynn Woodruff's name was inadvertently omitted from last issue's list of *Weatherlight* designers.

SHOW ME THE MANA CONTEST

Win a display box of Weatherlight boosters by finding this mana symbol ☹ hidden somewhere in your *Duelist* magazine.

Drop us a postcard telling us where you found it, and send your entry to *The Duelist* Mana Symbol, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. Only postcards will be accepted as legal entries. The winner will be drawn randomly from a pool of correct entries. Postmark deadline is the last day of October, 1997. Remember, the mana symbol must match the symbol (☹) shown here!

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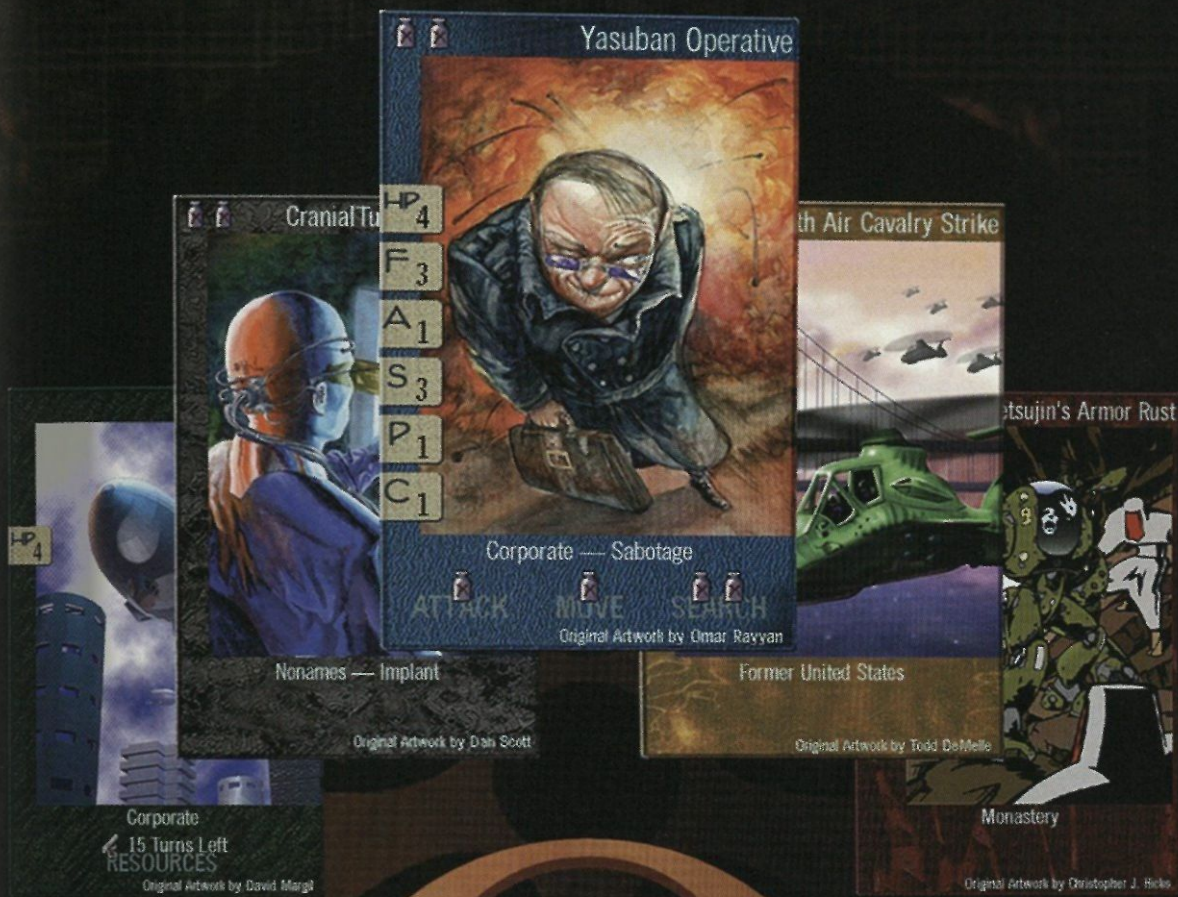
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October 4, 1997

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-Orim, Journals of the Weatherlight... upon arrival in Rath

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irresistible force of Time Warp,
a sorcery that grants you an
additional turn. And from the chaos
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creatures that gain diverse abilities
as they grow in number.*

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Don't Miss the Magic World Championships!

The fourth annual **Magic: The Gathering World Championships** will be held August 11-17 at the new state-of-the-art Wizards of the Coast Game Center in Seattle's University District.

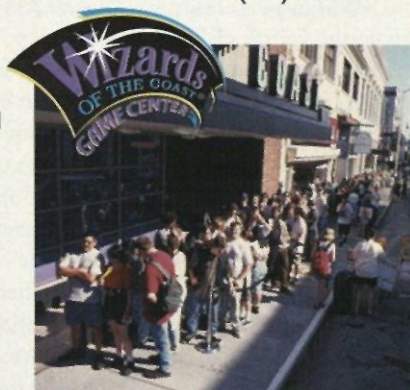
Drawing the top Magic players from around the globe, the World Championships kick off Monday, August 11, with "Worlds Warm-Up" events and will run through the entire week, culminating with the team competition on Saturday, August 16, and the individual finals on Sunday, August 17.

World-class Magic players representing more than thirty-five countries will compete for \$250,000 in cash prizes and the World Championship title. In addition to international competitors, the top

finishers from each of this season's Magic Pro Tour events and the Top 4 finishers from the 1996 World Championships will compete as well. The event also features numerous amateur tournaments, a Qualifier tournament for Pro Tour-Chicago (with a chance to win airfare), artist appearances and card signings, gunslinging, and much more. Beyond that, participants can enjoy many other activities at the 32,000-square-foot Wizards Game Center, which offers one of the largest collections of social, electronic, and computer-interactive games.

The Magic World Championships are open to the public from 8:00 A.M. to 2:00 A.M. each day. Daily admission is \$5. The Wizards of the Coast Game Center is located in Seattle's University District at

4518 University Way N.E. The Game Center's telephone number is (206) 675-1608. For more information, contact Wizards Customer Service at (206) 624-0933.



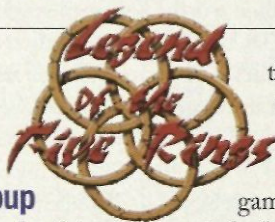
REX RYSTEDT

Wizards of the Coast Acquires Five Rings Publishing Group

On June 26, Wizards of the Coast announced that it had completed an agreement to acquire the Bellevue, Washington-based Five Rings Publishing Group, Inc. Both companies are privately held and financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Five Rings Publishing Group, founded in 1996, is the creator and publisher of the *Legend of the Five Rings* trading card game and the producer of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* collectible dice game. It is also the publisher of the soon-to-be-released *Dune: Eye of the Storm* trading card game.

Peter Adkison, president and CEO of Wizards, noted: "Five Rings Publishing is a young, dynamic company



that has created an impressive model for producing high-quality games over a short period of time. The company excels at combining strong property licenses with superb game play, and its expertise in the adventure game category greatly complements Wizards of the Coast's line of products."

Robert M. Abramowitz, CEO of Five Rings Publishing Group, added: "Five Rings Publishing and Wizards of the Coast both practice a corporate philosophy focused on interacting closely with consumers through demonstrations, tournaments, and active correspondence. The opportunity to combine the unique talents of the two companies will allow our products to continue to stand out in the marketplace."

Social Play Picking Up Speed

Arena-The League for Magic: The Gathering marked its one-year anniversary with the debut of *Van-*

guard, a new supplement for Magic (see page 68). Joseph Hauck, manager of social play programs for Wizards of the Coast, reiterated Arena's commitment to social Magic

BattleTech Contest Hired Guns

Prepare for *Mercenaries*, the second expansion for the BattleTech TCG, with the "Hired Guns" contest that challenges BattleTech players to recruit their own mercenary units for combat. As captain of your own team, your mission is to sign up the largest group of BattleTech TCG players you can for a chance to win terrific prizes.

The captain with the largest merc unit wins the grand prize: a trip to Seattle with three guests for the opportunity to clash with members of Wizards of the Coast's Game Design team. Fields of combat include the BattleTech TCG and the BattleTech simulator pods at the Wizards Game Center. The contest will be launched at GEN CON in Milwaukee (August 7-10) with the prerelease of *Mercenaries*, and will officially run through September 12. Winners will be announced in early October. Check your local game and hobby retailers in mid-August for entry forms, and scout out new recruits now for your chance to experience the ultimate tactical maneuver. For information, call (206) 624-0933.



players: "Arena allows players to take part in ongoing experiments with Magic that promise fun and excitement for all participants."

■ The Military League for Magic: The Gathering held its "Red, White, and Blue" tournaments throughout the Bosnian region and in specified U.S. Military locations in Korea on the Fourth of July. Though results were not available at press time, participation was projected at more than one thousand soldiers. Four U.S. soldiers participated in the U.S. Nationals at Origins '97, courtesy of Wizards of the Coast. These lucky players won Military League-sponsored Qualifier tournaments in Korea, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

■ Testing continues this summer in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Albuquerque on a new community organization-based play program for young Magic players. Wizards of the Coast plans to locate specific community centers (such as schools, libraries, and youth clubs) where players 15 and under can play Magic at a recog-

nized, safe site. The program includes Magic instruction and social play for new and experienced young players, and is scheduled for wider coverage in the fall.

A team composed of Wizards of the Coast employees challenged the students at Cascade Middle School (located in Seattle) to a Magic competition on June 10. The Magic Club was approved by the school principal, parents signed consent forms for student participation, and teacher advisors volunteered for weekly meetings. The club plans to challenge other community organizations in the fall.

■ Fourteen parents, including Wizards of the Coast Executive Vice President Vince Caluori, participated in a Parent Portal tournament at Pro Tour-New York. The first event of its kind, the Parent tournament promises to be a repeat event at future Pro Tours.

For more information on Wizards of the Coast's social play programs, please contact Customer Service at (206) 624-0933 or send email to <custserv@wizards.com>.



Magic in Bosnia: Morale Booster for Soldiers

In what may be a first for a game product, in Mannheim, Germany, U.S. General William Crouch, commander of Allied Land Forces Central Europe, recognized Wizards of the Coast for donating more than \$1.3 million worth of Magic cards to U.S. troops stationed in Bosnia. It's considered to be one of the largest donations to the effort in Bosnia to date.

The game has been a big hit for U.S. troops stationed in Bosnia as part of Operation Joint Endeavor, the peace-keeping effort in the war-ravaged country. Troops have enjoyed countless hours of entertainment during their

off-duty time playing Magic. Letters from soldiers arrive every day at Wizards headquarters describing the enjoyment Magic brings to troops.

"Magic is embraced by millions of game players across the world," Adkison said, "and we are thrilled that our troops in Bosnia and throughout the armed services have made it one of their top choices for entertainment."

Freddi Scott, Wizards military coordinator and former U.S. Army Sergeant, added: "While troops remain in top physical condition as they carry out duties to support the mission, it is the donation of Magic which has helped thousands of troops keep their intellectual skills honed."

Wizards Completes Acquisition of TSR

Wizards of the Coast announced on June 3 the completion of its acquisition of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin-based TSR, Inc., finalizing a transaction that began in April when the two leaders of the adventure gaming industry announced the signing of a letter of intent. Both companies are privately held, and financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. A product and employee integration plan is currently being developed and details will be announced at a later date. TSR is the publisher of the world-renowned

adventure game **Dungeons & Dragons**.

Wizards President and CEO Peter Adkison commented: "I am personally and professionally thrilled with the finalization of this agreement. The **Dungeons & Dragons** legacy has dominated the adventure roleplaying game category for more than twenty-two years, and we are thrilled to be new providers to its enormous worldwide audience."

Founded in 1975, TSR rose to a market



leadership position that endures today with the introduction of **Dungeons & Dragons**. The internationally famous game further generated a wide variety of best-selling adventure and roleplaying games and merchandise, including the *New York Times* best-selling book series, **Dragonlance**. The game **Dungeons & Dragons** was featured in an early scene of the 1982 Steven Spielberg hit movie, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*.

Insider Trading



by Mark Rosewater

Tempest Is Brewin'

Several issues ago, I told you about a stand-alone expansion I was helping to design called *Tempest*. It will soon be making its way to a store near you (scheduled for early October). But since we've got time before it's actually released, I thought I'd give you a small sampling of what to expect:

- A nonartifact creature that can be permanently destroyed by Disenchant but not by Wrath of God
- A blue enchantment that allows you to play two hands
- A creature which can't be counterspelled that will leave blue mages completely helpless
- The much-anticipated Elf lord
- An artifact called Booby Trap that inflicts 10

damage once your opponent sets it off

■ Finally, from deep in the bowels of Magic R&D, comes a monstrosity known simply as X4B.

Tempest will also continue the *Weatherlight* Saga. The art and flavor text will reveal myriad details of the first installment of The Rath Cycle as our heroes journey to a strange, dark plane to rescue their former captain. Several cards will be included in the set that represent characters from the story. One such card is Selenia, Dark Angel, the former guardian of Crovax's estate who now serves the dark forces of the evil evincar, Volrath.

South of the Border

With the 1997 *Duelist* Invitational in the books, there's only one thing left to do: plan the 1998 successor. I'm excited to announce that the 1998 *Duelist* Invitational will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in January 1998. As usual, final voting for invitees to the Invitational will occur at this year's World Championships in August at Wizards of the Coast's Game Center in Seattle. And for the first time, *Duelist* readers will get a chance to nominate their sixteen favorite players. See page 74 to cast your votes. Stay tuned for the final tallies.

MEET SELENIA THE BIGGEST, BADDEST ANGEL ON THE BLOCK



Top Ten "Most Broken Cards to Make It to Magic Development" (Alliances and Beyond)

10. ROPE OF ICE (Mirage)

♦♦♦♦♦, Enchantment, "During your upkeep, remove an island you control from the game or bury Rope of Ice. ♦: Remove an island you control from the game to take an extra turn immediately following an opponent's turn."
• "Oh look, a reusable Time Walk."

9. GUSTHA'S PLOW — now Lodestone Bauble (Alliances)

♦, Artifact, "♦, ♦: Sacrifice Gustha's Plow to put any number of target lands from target player's graveyard on top of his or her library in any order. That player may draw a card."
• "Hey, did anyone try this with Strip Mine?"

8. UNDISCOVERED PARADISE (Visions)

Land, "♦: Add one mana of any color to your mana pool. Return Undiscovered Paradise to owner's hand at end of turn."
• "Hey, did anyone try this with Stasis?"

7. REAL HORROR — now Strands of Night (Weatherlight)

♦♦, Enchantment, "Sacrifice a swamp: Return target creature in your graveyard into play."
• "Let's see, I have five swamps. Can you kill it six times?"

6. CHAOSORAMA (Tempest)

♦♦♦♦, Enchant World, "Treat all permanents as if they had the following: "If tapped, control of this permanent passes to target opponent at end of turn."
• "Just what we needed, Rainbow Vale World."

5. CHAOS TIMING TEACHER — now Maraxus of Keld (Weatherlight)

♦♦♦♦, Summon Dude, "/*, "Chaos Timing Teacher has power and toughness each equal to the number of untapped artifacts, creatures, and lands in play."
• "Is that a 27/27 or a 28/28?"

4. TIME ARC (Alliances)

♦♦♦♦, Sorcery, "Sacrifice an island. Choose and discard a card from your hand to take an extra turn after this turn. Draw a card at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep."
• "I wouldn't normally play this card, but it's a cantrip."

3. OTHERPOTENCE — now Infernal Tribute (Weatherlight)

♦♦♦♦, Enchantment, "Sacrifice a card: Draw a card."
• "Card disadvantage? What's that?"

2. TIME AND TIDE (Visions)

♦♦♦♦, Interrupt, "Instead of paying Time and Tide's casting cost, you may return three islands you control to owner's hand. Counter target spell."
• "Let me see if I get this straight. I get a free counterspell and I return three islands to my hand. Excuse me while I find my Stasis deck."

1. LIFE LEECH (Tempest)

♦, Sorcery, "Choose target creature or player. For each card you discard do 2 damage to that target and gain 2 life."
• "I'm not sure if a first turn 28 life-point swing is such a good idea."

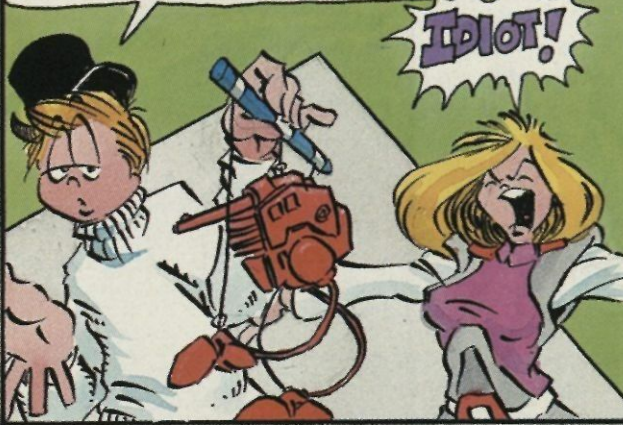
Mark Rosewater is editor in chief of *The Duelist* and works on the side as a member of Magic R&D. If he could, he'd devote 26 hours a day to Magic.

WHAT'S NEW?

Industrial Evolution

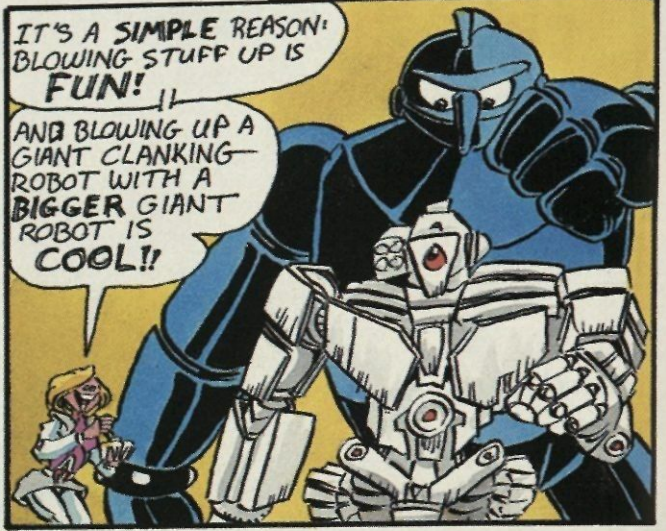
by Phil Foglio

OKAY- IT'S THE FUTURE, AND FOR SOME REASON, GIANT ROBOTS HAVE BECOME THE WEAPONS OF CHOICE, DESPITE NUMEROUS



IT'S A SIMPLE REASON: BLOWING STUFF UP IS FUN!

AND BLOWING UP A GIANT CLANKING ROBOT WITH A BIGGER GIANT ROBOT IS COOL!!



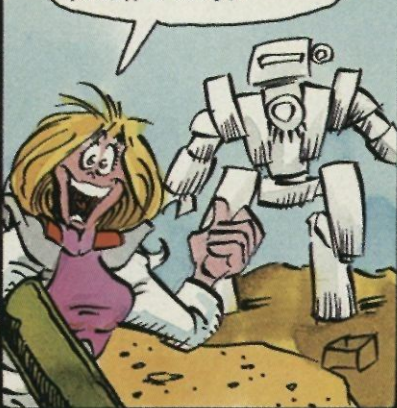
YOU WANT BACKSTORY? WE GOT IT! YOU WANT CHARACTERS? WE GOT IT! YOU WANT TO BLOW A MULTIBILLION DOLLAR ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION INTO YUGO-SIZED BITS AND THEN STOMP ITS HEAD IN WITH A PILE DRIVER? YOW! WE GOT IT!?



BUT NOT EVERYBODY IS SAFELY ENCASED IN SOLID STEEL. YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE REGULAR GROUND TROOPS, CITIES, AND EVEN ENEMY CIVILIANS - THESE YOU CAN CRUSH LIKE ANTS!



EASY! BUY 20 CASES OF CARDS - USE 'EM TO BUILD A LIFE-SIZE MECH MODEL -



AND BLOW IT UP!!



I LOVE THIS GAME!



327

K I L L S

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1997 Worlds Open Event Schedule

Monday and Tuesday, August 11-12

Numerous warm-up tournaments open to the public.

Wednesday, August 13

10:00 A.M.		Magic Standard (every hour)
10:00 A.M.		Magic Limited (every hour)
1:00 P.M.	#301	<i>Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances Limited*</i>
2:00 P.M.	#302	<i>Mirage-Visions Constructed*</i>
3:00 P.M.	#303	Magic Extended*
4:00 P.M.	#304	Apprentice Standard
5:00 P.M.	#305	<i>Fifth Edition-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
6:00 P.M.	#306	Apprentice Limited
7:00 P.M.	#307	Magic Classic*
8:00 P.M.	#308	<i>Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight Limited*</i>

Thursday, August 14

10:00 A.M.		Magic Standard (every hour)
10:00 A.M.		Magic Limited (every hour)
12:00 P.M.	#401	Magic Classic Restricted*
1:00 P.M.	#402	<i>Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
2:00 P.M.	#403	Apprentice Limited
3:00 P.M.	#404	<i>Fifth Edition-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
4:00 P.M.	#405	Magic Extended*
5:00 P.M.	#406	Apprentice Standard
6:00 P.M.	#407	<i>Mirage-Visions Constructed*</i>
7:00 P.M.	#408	<i>Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances Limited*</i>
8:00 P.M.	#409	Team Limited

Friday, August 15

10:00 A.M.		Magic Standard (every hour)
10:00 A.M.		Magic Limited (every hour)
11:00 A.M.	#501	Magic Extended*
12:00 P.M.	#502	<i>Mirage-Visions Constructed*</i>
1:00 P.M.	#503	Apprentice Standard
2:00 P.M.	#504	<i>Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances Limited*</i>
3:00 P.M.	#505	Team Limited
4:00 P.M.	#506	Apprentice Limited
5:00 P.M.	#507	Magic Classic*
6:00 P.M.	#508	<i>Fifth Edition-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
7:00 P.M.	#509	<i>Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
8:00 P.M.	#510	Mixed-Doubles Limited

Saturday, August 16

10:00 A.M.		Magic Standard (every hour)
10:00 A.M.		Magic Limited (every hour)
11:00 A.M.	#601	Pro Tour-Chicago Qualifier
12:00 P.M.	#602	Magic Classic Restricted*
1:00 P.M.	#603	Apprentice Limited
1:00 P.M.	#604	<i>Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
2:00 P.M.	#605	Apprentice Standard
3:00 P.M.	#606	<i>Korean Fourth Edition™ Limited*</i>
4:00 P.M.	#607	<i>Fifth Edition-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
5:00 P.M.	#608	Magic Extended*
6:00 P.M.	#609	<i>Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances Limited*</i>
7:00 P.M.	#610	Adult/Junior Team Limited
8:00 P.M.	#611	Magic: The Game Show

Sunday, August 17

10:00 A.M.		Magic Standard (every hour)
11:00 A.M.	#701	Pro Tour-Chicago Qualifier
12:00 P.M.	#702	Magic Extended*
1:00 P.M.	#703	Apprentice Limited
1:00 P.M.	#704	<i>Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight Limited*</i>
2:00 P.M.	#705	<i>Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances Limited*</i>
3:00 P.M.	#706	Magic Classic*
4:00 P.M.	#707	<i>Fifth Edition-Weatherlight Limited*</i>

*Denotes events open to the Merchant Team Challenge

Prices: \$6 - All Constructed events
\$15-20 - All Limited events
\$10 - All team events (per person)

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ABOUT THE MAGIC COMPENDIUM'S FEATURED ILLUSTRATOR

Scott M. Fischer is a freelance artist whose card illustrations can be seen in *Magic: V:TES*, *Rage*, *Arcadia*, and *Mythos*. In addition to card work, Fischer is self-publishing a book entitled "Eye Listen," with songs that lead you through his three-dimensional, interactive paintings.

MAGIC COMPENDIUM

Duelist Picks

This issue's theme is three-card combinations. They are exponentially more difficult to pull off than two-card combos, but no matter how much time, effort, and concentration it takes to assemble these little gems, the satisfaction you get—from both winning the game and bragging about it later—is well worth your investment.

Fallen Angel, Phyrexian Walker, and Enduring Renewal

Fallen Angel is an offensive dynamo that does not play well with others: for 3 ♣♣ you get a 3/3 flier that gets a +2/+1 bonus until end of turn for every creature you sacrifice to it. With Enduring Renewal in play, you're not allowed to keep the creatures you draw from your library, but if any of your creatures already in play hit the graveyard, you return them to your hand. Can you spell "infinite damage"? Drop the zero-casting-cost Phyrexian Walker and sack it to pump up the Angel. Enduring Renewal brings the Walker back to your hand, and you repeat the process until your Angel is as nasty as you want her to be.

Æther Flash, Varchild's War-Riders, and Dingus Staff
Varchild's War-Riders has a cumulative upkeep of giving

your opponent a 1/1 Survivor token. Æther Flash deals 2 damage to any creature that comes into play. This completely erases the negative effects of the War-Riders, as all Survivor tokens immediately suffer the effects of the Flash and die. The cherry on top is the Dingus Staff, an artifact that deals 2 damage to a player whenever a creature is put into his or her graveyard (and yes, token creatures do hit the graveyard, ever so briefly). The War-Riders's upkeep becomes a life drain on your opponent that increases by 2 every turn!

Ball Lightning, Berserk, and Phyrexian Dreadnought
Realize the fullest possible definition of "trample" with three cards and five mana.

☼☼☼ brings out Ball Lightning, a fearsome 6/1 trampler that is unaffected by summoning sickness and is buried at the end of any turn. Double your "blitzer's" power for ♣ with Berserk to do some serious damage—Berserk also gives a creature trample and kills it at the end of the turn if it attacks, which is redundant for Ball Lightning. Then, when your opponent is trying to recover from the drubbing (or if he or she tries to destroy your attacker), sack the doubled Ball Lightning and spend 1 to bring out Phyrexian Dreadnought. If a 12/1 trampler that only lasts one turn caused your opponent problems, imagine what a 12/12 trampler that lingers will do.



Blanket of Night, Kormus Bell, and Simoon

There's nothing like doubling or tripling your creature base while simultaneously destroying all your opponent's land. Blanket of Night causes any land that produces mana to also count as a swamp for 1 skull. For 4 more, Kormus Bell turns all swamps into 1/1 creatures, and for a final skull, Simoon deals 1 damage to all your opponent's creatures. Even if your opponent can limp along without mana for a turn or two, he or she will be hard pressed to stave off the 1/1 swamp-weenie horde.



Mana Flare, Snake Basket, and Márton Stromgald

St. Patrick may have driven the snakes out before him, but they will willingly follow Márton Stromgald and reap huge benefits for doing so. Use Mana Flare to

squeeze twice as much mana from your lands, then funnel it through Snake Basket to convert it into a whole lot o' 1/1 Cobra tokens. Márton's special ability is impressive: every creature that joins him in attacking or blocking gets

+1/+1 for each other creature in the group! The more snakes you break out of your serpentine *piñata*, the more attackers and blockers you'll have, and the stronger those forces will be with Márton at the helm.

Crypt Rats, Black (or Prismatic) Ward, and Spirit Link

Rat Bomb, Rats of God... whatever you call them, the Crypt Rats in this combo are so sweet they fairly melt in your mouth. Spend black mana to have your Rats do damage to



An opponent's creature, Binding Agony, and Fire Covenant

The old Channel-Fireball is back, albeit in a less obvious guise. Slap a Binding Agony on any of your opponent's creatures and any damage they take is also passed on to their controller. *Ice Age's* Fire

Covenant costs a mere 1 skull and deals 1 point of damage for each 1 life you spend, divided among any number of target creatures. To put it plainly, if you have more life than your opponent at any point in the early or middle game, you need never worry about the late game. To

make sure your opponent gets a creature (and to keep this in line with our theme), the clever black and red player will play with Varchild's War-Riders or Emberwilde Djinn.



Duelist Tricks

Deceptively simple, the Quirion Ranger's special ability—return a forest to your hand to untap target creature—makes it a whole bag of tricks by itself. Observe....

MANA-GLUT RANGER
Sure, it's a no-brainer to double your available mana by tapping a forest, returning it to your hand with the Ranger, then playing it again. Add in any of the mana elves to the mix, however, and you can tap both the forest and the elf for mana, then use the Ranger to untap the elf and return

the tapped forest to your hand, play the forest again, and retap both the forest and the elf for a grand total of four mana.

SURPRISE-DEFENSE RANGER
Make the most of your best creature by attacking with it, then use the Ranger to untap it once your opponent's attack has begun.

ARMAGEDDON THIS! RANGER
Reduce the impact of Armageddon (and any other land-destruction spell) by switching the Ranger's intended cause and effect: untap one of your creatures to return a forest to your hand in order to keep it from being destroyed.

HAND-SIZE RANGER
Like all good creatures, Maro draws its share of direct-damage spells. Unlike all good creatures, you can save Maro by using the Ranger to bounce a forest back to your hand just before damage resolution, increasing its toughness by one and in most cases, preserving it for another turn. Additionally, you can use the Ranger to help out spells that rely on the number of cards in your hand. Two more points of damage from Stormbind, or two more black mana from Cadaverous Bloom at the right moment can seal up a game.

"Wizards Picks & Tricks" was compiled by Scott McGoight, with contributions from Adam Conus, Brady Dommermuth, Jared Earle, Mark Rosewater, Henry Stern, and Brian Tinsman.

by Eric Tam

House Rules

Toronto Draft

Toronto Draft is a more sophisticated variant of the one-on-one Limited format named after its smaller southern neighbor, Rochester Draft. Like Rochester Draft, players alternately draft their cards from a revealed pool of cards. Unlike both Rochester Draft and most conventional draft formats, players do not draft before the duel begins; instead, all of the drafting is done during the game. Toronto Draft is best played with a random assortment of cards from booster packs or sealed decks with basic land removed.

The following exchange was overheard last February between Paul McCabe and Terry Borer while practicing for Pro Tour—Los Angeles.

McCabe: "I'm completely sick of playing Rochester Draft. I've played so many Rochester Drafts that I can't stay awake. And I'm sick of losing to bad mana draws. Surely, this evil format was created by the same people who invented the thumbscrew!"

Borer: "Let's take a break. We can play that landless Magic variant I heard about, where you can play any card as a land that produces one mana of any color in its casting cost. That way you won't be able to complain about getting a bad mana draw when I beat you again."

McCabe: "Great. More Limited Magic. Just what I need. Is there any way we can incorporate Rochester Draft into this variant so that we can double my pain?"

Borer (evil gleam in his eye): "Why yes, I think we can. Instead of drawing cards, we can draft for them during the game!"

McCabe: "Arrgh!"

RULES

Landless Magic: Any card can be played as a basic land that produces one mana of any color in its casting cost instead of being played for its normal function. Once a card is played as a land, it loses all its normal abilities and remains a land until it is removed from play. For instance, an Incinerate can either be used to deal three points of damage to any target, or it can be played permanently as a mountain. Cards with only one color in their casting cost can be played as basic land (that is, green cards can be played as forests, black cards can be played as swamps, and so on.). Multicolored cards played as land are considered nonbasic "multi-lands" which can produce one mana of any color in the card's casting cost. Artifacts are played as nonbasic lands which produce only generic mana. Nonbasic lands are played as is. Cards which affect land cards not in play (such as Tithe and Amnesia) only affect nonbasic land. If a card specifies that it can only affect basic land, such as Nature's Lore or Rampant Growth, it cannot be cast, but can still be played as a land.



Mutual Library: There is a single, shared stack of cards that serves as the library. At the beginning of the game, each player starts with three cards taken from this mutual library. The "play-or-draw" rule is *not* used.

The Library: Before the first player takes a turn, the top nine cards are turned face-up from the mutual library to create a drafting pool. This drafting pool represents the top of the library. Players do not draw cards as they would in normal Magic. Instead, each time a player is instructed to draw or take a card from the library, he or she selects one of the cards from the drafting pool. When there are no cards remaining in the drafting pool, add the next nine cards from the library to the drafting pool.

Bottomless Decks: Since both players share a mutual library, losing by running out of cards is meaningless. Simply reshuffle the graveyards when the library is exhausted.

Special Rules: Cards that affect the library should be interpreted in the manner which most closely resembles their actual powers in regular Magic. For the purpose of game balance we recommend that abilities that manipulate the order of multiple upcoming cards in the library (such as Millstone) or which reshuffle the library (such as Soldier of Fortune) have no effect on the drafting pool. Effects that send cards to the top of the library (such as Ether Well, Brainstorm, Gravebane Zombie, and Mystical Tutor) send the cards directly into the drafting pool.

Deck Clinic

by Charlie Catino and Mike Long

This issue's ailing deck is a "Sleight deck" that comes from Michael Livanos of New York. We feature pro Magic player Mike Long as a special guest doctor. If you'd like your deck to be considered for next issue's "Deck Clinic," just send a list of what's in your deck along with a brief description to:

Deck Clinic c/o The Duelist,
P.O. Box 707, Renton,
WA 98057, or to
<duelist@wizards.com>.

CHARLIE

The original deck is a Sleight deck, which uses Sleight of Mind and Mind Bend ("Change the text of target spell or permanent by replacing all instances of one color word with another"). The Sleight deck is essentially a combo deck, and combo decks are hard to make work. Remember that in a good combo deck every combo card must be able to stand alone. Sleight of Mind and Mind Bend merely change a word in card text and are not useful unless you have a card to play them on.

However, these deck types can still work. It's important that you design the deck so that when you draw a Sleight of Mind or Mind Bend, you can play it on something. This is why all the creatures I included have protection from a certain color. In addition, I included Circles of Protection so that you can Sleight (or Mind Bend) them to whatever colors you need.

Good Ol' Mana Problem.

The original deck has only twenty-four mana producers in sixty-nine cards, including some mana producers that cost two mana (the Diamonds) and some that aren't really permanent (such as Undiscovered Paradise). I cut down the

number of cards in the deck by eight while actually increasing the number of mana producers by one. This deck needs plenty of mana because one of its key strategies is to hold off on casting creatures until you can play them and Sleight their protection all in one turn; that way your opponent will be less likely to kill them before you can make use of them.

More Counterspells. There isn't enough counterspell ability in the original deck. More specifically, it doesn't have the right type of counterspells. Arcane Denial is not the best counterspell unless you're playing with cards like Stasis, Winter Orb, or Armageddon that make it hard for

your opponent to use card advantage against you. Also, the deck needs extra counterspells to protect the CoPs I included. I added more counterspells to the sideboard, as this deck will involve the sideboard much more than an average deck because of its color-specific spells.

Familiar Problems.

Some of the other minor problems I noticed in this deck occur in many of the decks submitted to Deck Clinic. In order to use Feldon's Cane effectively, for example, you have to shuffle a lot of cards from your graveyard into your library. By the time you'd be able to do that with this deck, you should already have taken control of the game, so Feldon's Cane won't help.

Another problem I often correct is the tendency for decks to attempt too many different things. Combo decks, especially, should concentrate primarily on what they do well. This deck has a lot of cards that depend on keeping creatures in play, so I removed Crusade, Righteousness, Spirit Link, and Karma. Karma is a good way to kill your opponent, but it will probably rely on Mind Bend changing a swamp to some other land type to be very effective.

MICHAEL LIVANOS'S DECK

CREATURES

- 2 Kjeldoran Outpost
- 2 Melesse Spirit
- 3 Repentant Blacksmith
- 2 Sea Sprite
- 4 Suq'Ata Firewalker
- 3 White Knight

SPELLS

- 3 Arcane Denial
- 2 Counterspell
- 2 Crusade
- 3 Disenchant
- 1 Feldon's Cane
- 2 Force of Will
- 1 Karma
- 3 Mind Bend
- 2 Reverse Damage
- 1 Righteousness
- 3 Sleight of Mind
- 2 Spirit Link
- 1 Thawing Glaciers
- 3 Wrath of God

MANA SOURCES

- 3 Adarkar Wastes
- 6 Island
- 2 Marble Diamond
- 9 Plains
- 2 Sky Diamond
- 2 Undiscovered Paradise

SIDEBOARD

- 1 Binding Grasp
- 1 Disenchant
- 1 Dissipate
- 2 Divine Offering
- 2 Honorable Passage
- 2 Hydroblast
- 1 Kismet
- 2 Lodestone Bauble
- 1 Magical Hack
- 1 Political Trickery
- 1 Reality Ripple

MIKE

My basic approach in tweaking this deck was to maintain its original strengths, like its versatility, while eliminating some of its awkward aspects. I removed Sleight of Mind and Mind Bend, which are often uneconomical because they depend on another card, and Melesse Spirit, which is over-costed. Because I took out the Sleight of Minds and Mind Bends, I also took out a few of the creatures with protection from a color. I replaced them with newer cards from the Standard (Type II) environment like Ward of Lights, which gives a creature protection from a color of your choice and can be played as an instant; Longbow Archers, an economical creature that can block flyers; and Impulse, which allows you to cycle through your library for a needed card. I also added a few Standard favorites like Jayemdae Tome for card drawing, Armageddon for a reset button, and Serrated Arrows to plink off weenies (these go well in almost any white deck).

Diversity and Control.

The original deck throws a couple different threats at its opponent. It has enough

creatures to create real pressure, including creatures with first strike, flying, and protection from a color, along with enough cards such as Kjeldoran Outpost to give it a quick edge. At the same time, it slows its opponent down with plenty of counterspells that range from removing the countered spell from the game to taking control of the countered spell. This diversity makes the deck difficult to play against, as an opponent won't know what to expect. Finally, this deck can also gain control with spells like Swords to Plowshares, Wrath of God, Disenchant, and Armageddon.

Sideboard. The sideboard addresses the most popular decks in current Standard play with extra removal for the five-color, mono-green beat-down deck; more Kjeldoran Outposts for counterspell decks; artifact and enchantment removal for Prison and Turbo-Stasis; and Circles, Sleights, and Greater Realm of Preservation for black or red decks. Once again, versatility is key.

Besides being a great resource for **Magic**, Charlie Catino is an excellent bowler. Mike Long's recent accomplishments as a pro player include being a finalist at the *Duelist Invitational* and more recently, winning *Pro Tour-Paris*.



THE DOCTORS ARE IN

CHARLIE'S DECK

CREATURES

1 Abbey Gargoyle
3 Cerulean Wyvern
1 Duskrider Falcon
3 Hazerider Drake
2 Melesse Spirit
1 Order of the White Shield
1 Sea Sprite

SPELLS

1 CoP: Black
1 CoP: Blue
1 CoP: Green
1 CoP: Red
1 CoP: White
4 Counterspell
1 Disenchant
1 Dissipate
1 Dream Cache
2 Force of Will
3 Mind Bend
2 Power Sink
1 Sleight of Mind
2 Ward of Lights
2 Wrath of God

MANA SOURCES

4 Adarkar Wastes
4 Flood Plain
8 Island
2 Marble Diamond
5 Plains
2 Sky Diamond

SIDEBOARD

1 Arcane Denial
1 CoP: Black
1 CoP: Blue
2 CoP: Green
1 CoP: Red
2 CoP: White
1 Disenchant
1 Dissipate
2 Force of Will
1 Greater Realm of Preservation
1 Political Trickery
1 Power Sink

MIKE'S DECK

CREATURES

2 Air Elemental
3 Kjeldoran Outpost
3 Longbow Archers
3 Order of the White Shield
3 White Knight

SPELLS

1 Armageddon
1 Counterspell
1 Desertion
3 Disenchant
1 Dissipate
2 Force of Will
3 Impulse
1 Jayemdae Tome
1 Power Sink
2 Serrated Arrows
2 Swords to Plowshares
1 Ward of Lights
3 Wrath of God

MANA SOURCES

4 Adarkar Wastes
7 Island
8 Plains
2 Quicksand
2 Thawing Glacier
2 Undiscovered Paradise

SIDEBOARD

1 CoP: Red
1 Disenchant
1 Divine Offering
1 Greater Realm of Preservation
2 Kjeldoran Outpost
3 Political Trickery
2 Serenity
2 Sleight of Mind
1 Swords to Plowshares
1 Wrath of God

Magic Rulings & Errata

A Summary of Recent, Significant Rulings

GENERAL RULINGS

The following rulings are meant to clarify the rulebook and how the game works in general.

1) Does Cursed Totem prevent me from using a Necrosavant's ability while the Necrosavant is in the graveyard?

No. Abilities that can be played when the card is not in play, such as pitching Elvish Spirit Guide for mana or putting Necrosavant into play from the graveyard, are not creature abilities, artifact abilities, and so on, because at the time they are played, the cards are not creatures, artifacts, and so forth. Instead, these abilities are creature-card abilities, artifact-card abilities, and so on. Thus, effects such as Gloom's and Cursed Totem's do not affect them.

2) If I play Kismet on my opponent, does this cause all of his or her permanents to phase in tapped?

No. When a permanent phases in, all abilities relevant to that permanent coming into play are ignored. For example, Nevinyrral's Disk doesn't automatically phase in tapped, Kismet doesn't affect permanents phasing in, and Zombie Mob's power and toughness (and its removal of summon cards from the graveyard) are not redetermined each time it phases in.

3) If a 1/1 Maro and an opposing Soldevi Sentry are killed by lethal damage at the same time, can drawing a card due to the Sentry's regeneration save Maro?

No. If more than one permanent is destroyed at once, such as with Nevinyrral's Disk, a single effect destroys the permanents. Regenerating a permanent will modify the destroy effect by replacing the destruction of that permanent with the regeneration effect. No other permanents will be affected as a result, even in cases of damage dealing where regenerating one creature raises the toughness of another. In this

example, regenerating the Sentry enables Maro's controller to draw a card, thus raising Maro to 2/2. But because both permanents were destroyed in a single "effect," Maro is still destroyed. Effects that prevent destruction by means other than regeneration (the effects of Pyramids, for example) follow the same rule.

4) I have a Vaporous Djinn in play, and my opponent has Pendrell Mists in play. What happens if I don't pay the Djinn's upkeep? I can't phase the Djinn out and bury it at the same time.

When multiple upkeep costs of a permanent combine, the consequences of not paying those costs form a series of effects rather than one total effect. These effects occur in the normal order: first the permanent's own upkeep consequences (if any), and then all others in the order in which the source of the cost came into play. In this example, if you pay the Djinn's combined upkeep cost, you simply pay $1\text{ }♣\text{ }♣$. If you don't pay the cost, you apply the consequences in the usual order. Thus, the Djinn's own



compiled by
Tom Wylie

upkeep consequence phases it out, and then the Pendrell Mists's upkeep consequence does nothing, because the Djinn has already left play. If the upkeep costs themselves are contradictory, then you simply can't pay the combined upkeep cost and must suffer the appropriate consequences.

5) I have Lord of the Pit in play when my opponent plays Pendrell Mists. Does the optional nature of the Mists's upkeep cost allow me to refuse to pay Lord of the Pit's upkeep?

No. Multiple upkeep costs of a permanent combine to form single cost. This means that if any of those upkeep costs are mandatory, then the entire upkeep cost effectively becomes mandatory. Therefore, if Lord of the Pit comes into play when Pendrell Mists is in play, then during upkeep the Lord of the Pit's controller must sacrifice a creature and pay 1 .

6) If there are two Helm of Awakenings in play, can I cast a 1-point Drain Life by paying only $♣$?

Yes. Generic mana costs are those with colorless mana symbols, including $♣$. It doesn't matter whether the type of mana that can be spent paying that cost is specified. Drain Life has an additional cost of $♣$, which is a generic mana cost, even though the text on Drain Life says, "Spend only black mana in this way." Thus, Helm of Awakening can reduce that cost.

REVERSALS AND OTHER CHANGES

7) My opponent uses my Zur's Weirding to make me discard a Sand Golem I just drew. Does the Golem's ability trigger?

Yes. The controller of a spell or ability is the player who plays that spell or ability. This means that a card and its ability can have different controllers. With Zur's Weirding, the controller of



the ability is the player who plays the ability, not necessarily the controller of the card. This also means that abilities of cards out of play (Elvish Spirit Guide, Necrosavant, etc.) have a controller.

- 8) **Do Assembly Workers have the creature type "Assembly Worker," or are they just named that?**

Contrary to certain rulings about Mishra's Factory and Assembly Workers, simply making a land into a creature does not create a creature type for that land. For example, suppose Living Lands is in play (all forests are 1/1 creatures). If An-Zer-rin Ruins is played (creatures of a chosen creature type do not untap), choosing "forest" as the creature type would not prevent forests from untapping.

- 9) **What happens if I tap and sacrifice my Strip Mine enchanted with Kudzu?**

Previously it was ruled that if Kudzu is on a land that is sacrificed and tapped at the same time (as in this example), then Kudzu's ability would rescue Kudzu from being buried. This exception to the rules has been repealed; Kudzu must be in play when the effect of its ability resolves in order for it to move to another land. Therefore, Kudzu would be buried when Strip Mine is sacrificed.

- 10) **Suppose a Sengir Vampire damages an animated artifact, which is later de-animated, and then destroyed. Will the Vampire get a +1/+1 counter?**

No. Sengir Vampire's ability triggers when a creature it has damaged is put into a graveyard; it does not trigger whenever it damages a creature. Thus, Sengir Vampire does not get a counter when a noncreature permanent is put into its owner's graveyard, even if that permanent was a creature at some point earlier in the turn when the Vampire damaged it.

- 11) **When cards return to play from an Oubliette or Tawnos's Coffin, do they return to play tapped, or do they return to play and then become tapped?**

They return to play tapped. Thus, abilities that trigger on permanents becoming tapped, such as Betrayal's, will not trigger.

ERRATA

The following rulings involve card and rulebook errata, or at least reading cards slightly differently.

- 12) **In *Fifth Edition*, all cantrips were changed to "draw a card at the beginning of the next turn," rather than "at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep." Do the cantrips that weren't reprinted have this change?**

Yes. All cantrips have this change.

- 13) **Shouldn't *Dance of the Dead* have errata to match the wording on *Necromancy* and the *Fifth Edition Animate Dead*?**

Yes. *Dance of the Dead* has the following changes as errata: Its card type is now "enchantment," and its text reads, "When you play *Dance of the Dead*, choose target creature card in any graveyard. When *Dance of the Dead* comes

into play, put that creature into play, tapped, and *Dance of the Dead* becomes a creature enchantment that targets the creature.

Enchanted creature gets +1/+1, and does not untap during its controller's untap phase. At the end of his or her upkeep, its controller may pay an additional 1 to untap it. If *Dance of the Dead* leaves play, bury the creature."



SPECIFIC INTERPRETATIONS

- 14) **If I pump my Vampire Bats twice and then play *Celestial Dawn*, can I pump them with white mana later this turn?**

Yes. Once the Dawn is in play, the Bats' ability just limits the amount of you can spend on the ability; the amount of you already spent is irrelevant.

- 15) **Suppose I play *Lichenthrope's* upkeep ability when it has no counters on it. In response, I play my *Cinder Giant's* upkeep ability, so *Lichenthrope* gets two -1/-1 counters before its upkeep resolves. Does one of these counters get removed?**

Yes. When the upkeep effect resolves, there will be counters on *Lichenthrope*, so one will be removed.

Continuity FAQ

compiled by Pete Venters
and Scott Hungerford

Welcome to a new section in which the Continuity department answers some of those perplexing story questions. We encourage you to email us at <duelist@wizards.com> and we'll pick the most frequently asked questions to answer (as well as the occasional oddity). Unfortunately, we cannot respond directly to your questions due to time restrictions, so keep watching this space.

Where can I get maps of Dominia?

Dominia is a multiverse, a series of dimensional planes that are constantly moving. Because of this, any map would merely be a snap shot, and in the next moment the multiverse would have changed. Maps of individual planes, however, are possible. Dominaria is currently our most detailed plane, and maps of the Domains and Jamuraa appear in the 1997 and 1998 Workman wall calendars. The globe of Dominaria is still in development in Continuity, but no, the globe's not for production, it's our personal reference tool.

Who are Urza and Mishra?

Urza and Mishra were brothers and the key opponents in the Brothers' War as seen in *Antiquities*. They were not wizards, but master artificers, skilled in the creation of artifacts. Their war wrecked the continent of Terisiare, destroyed another island (Argoth), and caused climatic shifts sufficient to start an ice age.

Who won the Brothers' War, Urza or Mishra?

Scholars disagree on the fate of Urza, but they all agree that Mishra died.

What is the backstory for *Fifth Edition*?

There is no backstory for *Fifth Edition*, as the cards in main editions are selected for matters of game balance, card mechanics, and tournament play. The *Fifth Edition* card set offers glimpses into many periods of Dominian history.

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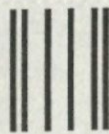
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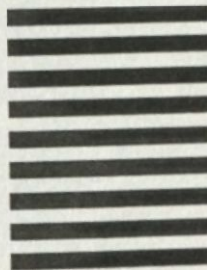
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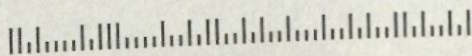
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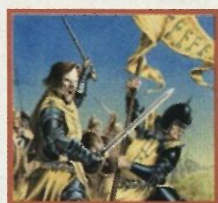
Weatherlight Ports of Call

The Continuity department maintains the “Worlds of Dominia,” the setting for *Magic: The Gathering*. To that end, we just took a long trip into the plane of Rath, the grim setting for *Tempest*. We’ve only now begun to collate our bloodied notes, so you’ll have to wait until next issue for your first look. For now, while we catch our breath and stitch our wounds, we’ll take you on a little retrospective of the locations visited in *Weatherlight*.

Benalia

The capital of the Benalish Empire is the largest city in the Domains with a population exceeding 200,000. Seven clans rule the Empire in a rotating system that allows each clan to rule a different division—army, navy, treasury, and so on—each year in a seven-year cycle. This has continued for generations, its clumsiness overlooked as the clans cannot agree on another method of rule.

Only one power in Benalia exists outside the seven clans: the Benalish Heroes. The “Hero” caste are neutral guardians of the realm, trained to place the realm above clan politics. Gerrard was a member of the “Masters of Arms,” an elite group of Heroes that have shown exemplary skill and courage in the service of the Empire.



DAN FRAZIER



PETE VENTERS

Llanowar

The Llanowar forest isn’t ruled by a single elven nation. It is actually split into eight regions, each controlled by a single extended family, or “elfhame” as it is known in the elven tongue. The eight elfhames are wildly divergent, ranging from tribes to tree towns to feudal kingdoms.

The elfhames have little in common bar their species, language, and a healthy dose of xenophobia. Most of the elves justifiably do not trust humans, as their kin were butchered in a war for precious wood during the Ice Age. To most human nations this is ancient history, but to the elves such memories are kept alive through vivid stories filtered through only three long-lived generations. Mirri the Cat Warrior of the *Weatherlight* was only accepted into the Llanowar culture after being acknowledged by the family of Rofellos. Even then her presence was merely tolerated.

Tolaria

Most people think of Tolaria as a myth—a land of great wealth that was lost to an unknown curse that covered the island in terrible, devouring mists. For centuries sailors have told tales of that land, of people who entered the



JOHN AVON

isle’s interior only to return weeks later without any knowledge of the time that had passed...or worse still, of people gone for hours but aged years.

Many adventurers out to make names for themselves are attracted to Tolaria. The horrifying stories told by survivors serve as fuel to their burning ambitions.

Rumor persists that the Black Lotus blooms each year in Tolaria, and that this “Lotus Vale” is guarded jealously by an anonymous order of wizards. Hanna’s father Barrin is the leader of this order and Ertai is an adept. Despite his constant bragging, Ertai has studiously avoided any mention of the order.

Urborg

While today Urborg is the name of a large tropical isle and its satellites, legend has it that Urborg was once only the name of a city upon the isle. This hellish demesne was controlled by the lich, Nevinyrhal, who was at war with Bogardan. Little is known of the war, as it predates the Ice Age, but legend states that Nevinyrhal was outmaneuvered and the city of Urborg was swallowed by a volcano that tore up from the ground directly beneath it. Nevinyrhal’s last act was to use his disk to deny his enemies any of the magical trove that might survive the flames.



PATRICK KOCHAKUJ

Modern Urborg is ruled by several horrors, many claiming to be Nevinyrhal’s undying lieutenants. Each lieutenant asserts that the site of the original city exists within its borders, and this ancient contention has split the land into many factions.

Crovax’s island estate was once on the border of this realm, but has since been consumed by Urborg’s expansionism. Urborg’s rulers have grown bolder since Kaervek’s war in Jamuraa, and it may not be long before the region suffers another major conflict.



TERESE NIELSEN

Bogardan

In contrast to Urborg’s jungles, Bogardan is predominantly arid and riddled with volcanoes. The air is often choked with cinders and the night sky glows a dull red. Most of Bogardan’s settlements are beside the meager rivers that flow through two canyons that cross the land. Many of the cultures are primitive, enthusiastically sacrificing both kin and strangers to the volcanoes they perceive to be gods.

Bogardan is the second most powerful site of red mana on Dominaria (Shiv being the first). Several portals to the plane of Wildfire exist, but the Emberwilde Order has made no move into Bogardan for fear of insulting the powerful entities that reside in its depths. While these entities remain unidentified, it is believed they influence Bogardan’s burgeoning population of canines, from the “Beasts” to Lava Hounds to dozens more mundane and magical species.

Frequently Asked Questions for Weatherlight

BY WIZARDS OF THE COAST CUSTOMER SERVICE

1) Can I counter a spell or ability by playing *Abeyance* in response?

No. Preventing a player from playing spells or abilities of a certain type doesn't counter those that have already been played.

2) If *Abyssal Gatekeeper* is put into the graveyard at the same time as another of my creatures, can I choose that creature to be the one that's buried as a result of the *Gatekeeper* going to the graveyard?

No. Your other creature is put into your graveyard at the same time as *Abyssal Gatekeeper*, and therefore won't be in play when the *Gatekeeper's* ability is played.

3) Can I sacrifice a creature killed by *Æther Flash* before it goes to the graveyard?

Not usually, because most spells and abilities can't be played before *Æther Flash's* ability triggers and resolves. But if you can play an ability that would involve sacrificing the creature—to a mana source, for example—you may do so.

4) Can I cast *Choking Vines* if I'm not assigning any blocking creatures?

Yes. "Play only when blockers are declared" means that you must play *Choking Vines* during the combat step when blockers would be declared, not that you must declare blockers to play *Choking Vines*.

5) If I draw another counter-spell when my *Disrupt* resolves, can I use that spell

to counter the original spell, assuming the controller paid the 1?

Yes. Multiple batches of interrupts can target a single spell.

6) Can I tap a creature with *Fire Whip*, even if it has summoning sickness?

No. Errata has been issued on *Fire Whip*; the second ability now reads, "Enchanted creature gains {C}: This creature deals 1 damage to target creature or player."

7) If a creature's damage has a side effect (like giving poison counters or forcing a discard when damage is dealt) will the side effect happen when *Fire Whip's* second ability is played?

Yes. Because the creature is actually dealing the damage, any side effects of that damage still apply.

8) When I play *Firestorm*, can I choose a single target more than once?

No. If a spell or ability requires choosing more than one target, you cannot choose the same target more than once (*Fifth Edition* rulebook, p. 37). If there are not enough targets, you cannot cast the spell.

9) If *Fungus Elemental* phases out and then back in again, can I put more counters on it?

Yes. The rule about ignoring "comes into play" abilities when a permanent phases in applies only to abilities that would trigger when something comes into play, or that modify how something comes into play. Spells and abilities used later in the turn can take advantage of a creature that phased in just as easily as a permanent that came into play by other means.

10) If I have *Goblin Bomb* in play, can I flip the coin as many times as I like as long as it's during my upkeep?

No. *Goblin Bomb* has a phase ability, which like any

other phase ability, may be played only once per turn.

11) What will happen if I use *Jabari's Banner* to give an attacker flanking after blockers have already been assigned?

The flanking ability triggers only when a creature is assigned to block—not at any other time. This means that after blockers have been assigned, whether a creature gains or loses flanking is generally unimportant.

12) Can I tap a creature that has summoning sickness to give *Llanowar Behemoth* its +1/+1 bonus?

Yes. Summoning sickness explicitly affects abilities with {C} in their activation cost—not abilities that require tapping the creature as a cost.

13) Can I tap *Lotus Vale* for mana before I sacrifice the two lands?

No. You must deal with a card's coming-into-play cost before you can play any of its abilities.

14) When *Mana Web's* effect taps a player's lands, will that cause him or her to take mana burn?

No. *Mana Web* does not cause the lands to generate mana.

15) When *Mana Web's* ability triggers, can the affected lands be tapped for mana before *Mana Web's* effect resolves?

Yes. You may activate a mana source after a triggered effect triggers, but before it resolves.

16) If I have a *Library of Leng* in play, can I put the cards discarded from *Psychic Vortex* back on top of my library?

Yes.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Does *Abeyance* prevent lands from being tapped for mana?

Yes. Like *City of Solitude*, *Abeyance* shuts down all abilities requiring an activation cost, including those played as mana sources.

If I have *Familiar Ground* and *Goblin War Drums* in play, are my creatures unblockable?

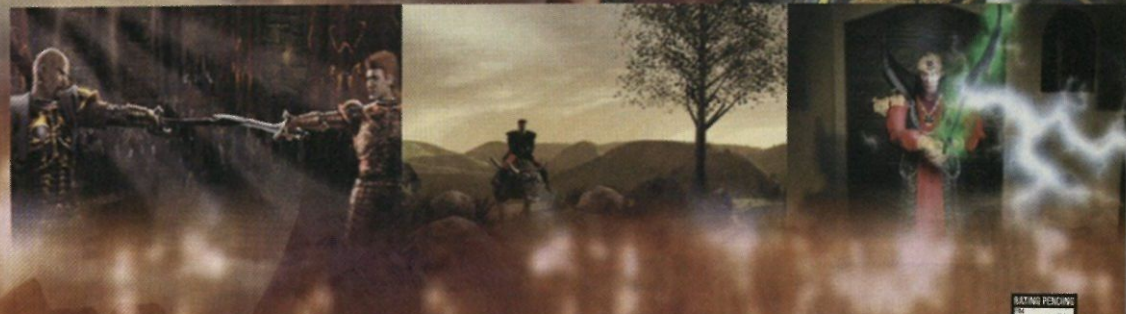
Yes, because the defending player can't declare any group of blockers that would be legal under both abilities.



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Tournament News

New Super Series Set for Magic Juniors

Beginning with Pro Tour—Chicago in October, there will no longer be a Junior division in Pro Tour play. While players of all ages may still compete in the Pro Tour, the Magic Junior Super Series has been established specifically for Magic players 18 and under and offers large scholarship prizes.

The Junior Super Series divides the U.S. into three regions, or divisions: Central, Western, and Eastern. In each division, a series of approximately twenty-four Junior Challenge tournaments will occur each year, leading up to a Junior Divisional Championship. The Super Series culminates in the Super Series Championship, scheduled for June 1998. All Super Series tournaments will use the Standard (Type II) format.

Junior Challenge tournaments are open to all Magic players 18 and under. The Top 2 players from each Junior Challenge will earn an invitation to Day 2 of the Junior Divisional Champi-

onship in that region. The winner of each Challenge also receives a \$250 travel award.

The Junior Divisional Championships will coincide with each of the three 1997-1998 North American Pro Tour events (Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York).

Each Divisional Championship features an open tournament on Saturday that feeds sixteen players into the Finals on Sunday. The remainder of the field on Sunday will be comprised of finalists from the preceding Junior Challenge tournaments. The Top 8 finishers in each Divisional Championship will earn invitations to Day 2 of the Junior Super Series Championship (including airfare and accommodations for two).

The Super Series Championship represents the pinnacle of the Junior Super Series, and is open to all Magic players 18

and under. Approximately forty top finishers from the first day will advance to Day 2, along with the Top 8 finishers from each of the Divisional Championships. Scholarship funds totaling \$250,000 will be divided among all players who reach Day 2 of the event.

All references to prizes and invitations above apply equally to each of the two age divisions of the Super Series: 16 to 18, and 15 and under. Players with any Pro Tour player points are prohibited from competing in the Junior Series tournaments. These players may apply to have their amateur status reinstated by contacting the Pro Tour Advisory Board at (425) 204-7284.

For more information about the Junior Super Series, or to find out where the Junior Challenge tournaments will be held in your area, please call Wizards Customer Service at (425) 624-0933, or send email to <custserv@wizards.com>.

—Andy Collins

—Jason Carl, DCI Policy Director

DCI Tournament Changes



The DCI announced significant changes to Classic-Restricted

(Type I.5) tournaments on May 1, 1997, effectively creating a brand-new competitive environment. To promote clarity and avoid confusion with existing format names, the DCI will title this new tournament format "Extended." The DCI will begin sanctioning Extended-format tournaments on July 1, 1997. Please refer to the DCI's May 1 announcement for deck-construction information and a list of banned cards.

Classic Restricted (Type I.5) Remains Sanctioned

The Classic-Restricted format will continue its role as a sanctioned sub-type of Classic (Type I). Contrary to the information included in the May 1 announcement, the DCI will continue to track and publish ratings for this format as part of its Classic ratings. Please refer to the

DCI Standard Floor Rules for deck-construction information and a list of banned cards.

The DCI hopes these clarifications simplify its May 1 announcement and make the changes more understandable. Please note that no "tournament type" (Type I, Type II, and so on) is associated with the Extended format. Soon all sanctioned formats for Magic will be known by their proper name, rather than type, as follows:

Classic	(Type I)
Classic Restricted	(Type I.5)
Standard	(Type II)
Extended	
Limited	

The DCI also hopes this announcement reflects its sincere commitment to supporting an exciting, equitable, and accessible organized-play structure for all of its members around the world.

—Jason Carl, DCI Policy Director

PRO TOUR—NEW YORK WINNERS

TERRY BORER, 19, (above) of North York, Canada, was crowned Master division champion, outlasting a Booster Draft (*Fifth Edition-Visions*) battle of 259 competitors and taking home a whopping \$26,000 in cash. Meanwhile, **RON FRANKE, 17**, of Roswell, Georgia, emerged as U.S. Junior Nationals champ, outdueling a field of 121 other players. Franke earned a \$14,000 college scholarship as a result.

PHOTOS BY THEO ANDERSON

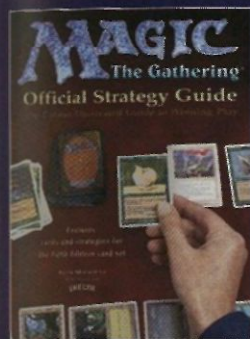
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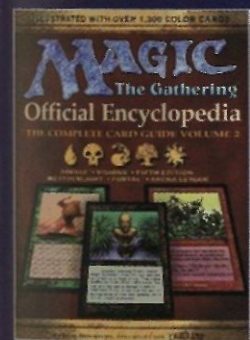
Official Strategy Guide
Official Portal Guide

Thunder's Mouth Press is proud to present four important new reference books on Magic The Gathering. Produced in association with Wizards of the Coast, and *The Duelist*, these books will provide all the information a player will need to build a better deck and play a stronger game.



Each chapter features color illustrations, making all tactics easy to follow. Experts and beginners alike will find the book a valuable guide for their growth as players.

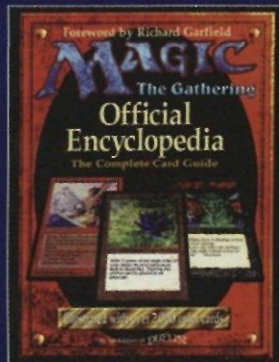
The Official Strategy Guide, written by Beth Moursund, Magic rules expert, *Duelist* contributor, and frequent judge at Magic events, is a manual that provides players with important tips on all facets of the game.



Each page includes reproductions of cards with information crucial for collectors: the rarity of the card in each set in which it appeared, the sets in which different versions of the card appears, the card's current errata and notes on the card's general function.

The Fifth Edition Expansion Encyclopedia picks up where the *Complete Card Guide* left off, covering every new card released since the middle of 1996, including cards from the *Fifth Edition*, *Mirage* and *Visions*.

The Complete Card Guide is illustrated with all of the over 2000 Magic cards released up to October 1996, including discontinued cards, promotional and specialty cards. You can learn how to identify cards and packaging from the different editions, find out how Magic cards are made, and get your first look at the relics from Magic's past.



For the next generation of Magic players, *The Official Portal Guide* explains the rules to the *Portal* edition of Magic The Gathering, which, like the more than 200 new cards in the *Portal* set, have been simplified for easy learning. It features an overview of the set with reproductions of all the cards and hints on successful strategies for play and deck construction.



Available at your local bookstores, or call 1-800-788-3123.

Official Strategy Guide, \$16.95, ISBN: 1-56025-149-2

Complete Card Guide, \$19.95, ISBN: 1-56025-140-9

Fifth Edition Expansion Encyclopedia, \$19.95, ISBN: 1-56025-150-6

Official Portal Guide, \$10.95, ISBN: 1-56025-152-2

Single-Card Strategies

by JEFF FRANZMANN

Nekrataal

Far from the Mourning Lands, across the emerald reaches of the Wayfarer's Sea, the bronze spires of Cameshbaan glimmer in the dying light of day. Within the shadowed halls of a Tarkaan's palace, a long dormant power has awakened. In a time when The Wretched walk, how much longer would it be until the Nekrataal arose?



Nekrataal is a card that embodies two of the most important aspects of a Magic duel: creature removal and card advantage.

When Nekrataal comes into play, you can bury an opponent's nonartifact, nonblack creature, and at the same time force your opponent to deal with Nekrataal using his or her own creature-removal resources. Assuming Nekrataal isn't countered or prevented from coming into play, the casting of this one creature can potentially cost your opponent two cards. And once in play, the 2/1 first strike Nekrataal is hardly substandard.

It is often advisable to hold on to Nekrataal rather than bring it into play early. Why destroy a Mtenda Lion when a Nettletooth Djinn may be waiting in the wings? Remember that it can only target a nonartifact, nonblack creature. If your opponent has all black creatures in play, the Nekrataal might force you to bury one of your own.

There are several ways to reuse Nekrataal in order to bury additional creatures: Unsummon, Boomerang, Undo, and Man-o'-War each enable you to retrieve it from play into your hand; Shadow Guildmage and Civic Guildmage can return it to the top of your library. Even better, use Dragon Mask to turn Nekrataal into a 4/3 creature for the rest of the turn before it returns to your hand. Or let it lie in your graveyard until your opponent declares an attack—then cast Necromancy as an instant and animate your Nekrataal, unexpectedly blocking one creature and destroying another when it comes into play.

compiled by
Jeff Donalds

Key Plays

If you see or hear about a particularly interesting key play, write to us about it at "Key Plays," c/o The Duelist, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057, or <duelist@wizards.com>.

This issue's key plays both took place at Pro Tour—New York in June. The first involved Michigan's Patrick Chapin and Canada's Terry Borer. Chapin won the battle, but ultimately lost the war. In the end, Borer was crowned champion and Chapin finished as a quarterfinalist. For the second, read on....

Inferno's Surprise Factor

During the first game of the Pro Tour—New York quarterfinal match between Patrick Chapin and Terry Borer, an amazing comeback occurred.

The match was going very poorly for Chapin, and Borer was definitely in a superior game position. Borer cast creature after creature, including Goblin Digging Team, Ironclaw Orcs, Suq'Ata Lancer, and Hill Giant. Chapin tried to stay alive by casting an occasional blocker to stop the onslaught, but he appeared to be doomed.

On Borer's seventh turn he cast Giant Strength on one of his creatures and attacked with everything, looking to show Chapin a world of hurt. But Chapin wasn't about to go down easy. He played his trump card: Inferno, an instant that allowed him to inflict maximum damage with the biggest surprise factor during Borer's attack phase.

The Inferno did 6 damage to both players (bringing Borer to 14 life) and killed all the creatures on the board. During Chapin's next main phase, he summoned Scaled Wurm while Borer looked on with no cards in hand. Borer could not get rid of the Scaled Wurm. On Chapin's next turn he attacked with the Wurm, bringing Borer to 7 life. Chapin then cast a 7-point Hurricane for the kill.

After the game, Chapin remarked: "I caught him completely off guard when I cast Inferno because it looked like there was no way I was going to win that game. I'm just glad I won even one game against Borer with my incredibly janky deck."



Janky?

Chapin makes an amazing comeback with Inferno.

Pumping the Flame Spirit

Another pivotal key play from Pro Tour—New York involved an early-round match between Florida's Adam Maysonet and Virginia's David Mills. Maysonet and Mills were locked in a creature standoff with no fliers in play. Mills had Gaseous Form and Torture in play, along with

Crown of the Ages. Maysonet announced his attack phase, declaring Flame Spirit as attacker. Mills decided he would move the Torture enchantment onto the Flame Spirit in order to block and kill it. Mills only had one black mana available, which he used to put a -1/-1 counter on the Flame Spirit.

It was at this point that Maysonet noticed that the Flame Spirit's toughness was low enough that it could be given flight using Stone Giant's ability. Maysonet promptly activated the Stone Giant and flew Flame Spirit in for massive damage, pumping it with lots of red mana. Next turn Maysonet finished off Mills—and went on to win the match.



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Single-Card Strategies

by JEFF FRANZMANN

Man-o'-War

The sound of the Nekrataal's boots against the marble tiles echoed throughout the palace. When it reached the menagerie, it looked towards the far end of the room where an immense glass cylinder was filled with water. Gently floating within was a mass of tentacles and translucent material—the deceptively beautiful Man-o'-War.



Man-o'-War is a creature ideally suited to environment control. It has a relatively cheap casting cost for a respectable power and toughness and an ability to unsummon a creature when it comes into play.

Timing is very important when playing Man-o'-War. Optimize its ability by casting it at the last possible moment. For example, try this trick: Announce your attack. If your opponent decides to play spells before you declare attackers, then your attack is aborted. You may then cast Man-o'-War, return one of your opponent's creatures to his or her hand, and declare your attack again.

Combine Man-o'-War with cards that return creatures to your hand (such as Dragon Mask) and you can reuse Man-o'-War again and again. If you have non-land mana sources, combine this loop with the effects of Winter Orb and you can keep your opponent's creatures off the table. You can also use Man-o'-War to return Nekrataal to your hand, cast it again, and bury an additional creature.

If your opponent is making heavy use of creatures such as Bull Elephant that have a casting cost beyond mana, casting Man-o'-War can set your opponent back even further. And when you target such creatures as Tar Pit Warrior or Skulking Ghost, Man-o'-War has the ability to destroy.

Man-o'-War also serves to protect your own creatures from spells like Binding Grasp, Control Magic, or Mind Harness. If your opponent takes control of your creatures or animates them with Necromancy, you can regain control by summoning Man-o'-War and targeting an enchanted creature, thus destroying the enchantment.

SINGLE-CARD STRATEGIES IS A TRADEMARK OF JEFF FRANZMANN.



International Report

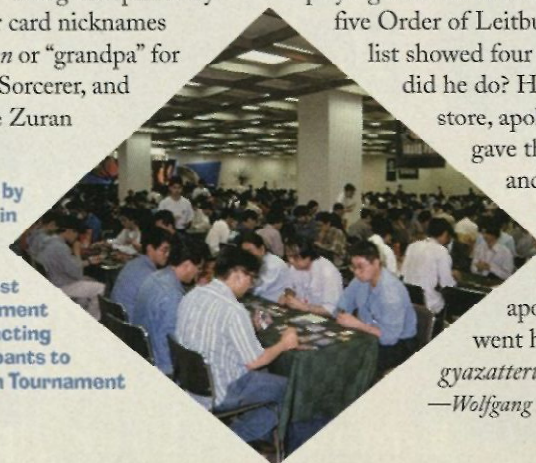
'Gyazatteru' in Japan

Japan is pop-culture heaven, the land of "anime," "manga," and "tamagotchi." While Japan is sometimes adrift in an ocean of fads, a certain trading card game has washed ashore to stay: **Magic** is huge in Japan, and shows no signs of slowing down. The Japanese call it *gyazatteru*, which means "playing Magic."

Slanguage: The Japanese have created their own slang for **Magic**. They use many American terms, partly because of the Internet, partly because the Japanese language has a long tradition of incorporating foreign words. Early players adopted English terms for the game's phases: *abntappu* (untap), *appukeepu* (upkeep), and *dobrobb* (draw), followed by *endoh* (end of turn). Then there's *buustaa* (booster), *shirudo* (sealed), *sutaataa* (starter), *dekki* (deck), and *rimuubu* (remove)—easy for any player to recognize.

One uniquely Japanese term has been pulled from the computer industry: *omoi*, meaning "heavy," as in "that deck's too heavy." The term is used in reference to computers with too many extensions that slow the system down. With regard to **Magic**, we're not talking about a 250-card monstrosity, we're talking about casting cost. If a deck's average casting cost is so high that it rarely gets a creature out, it's heavy. If you see a newbie deck loaded with beefy creatures that cost five or more, that's *omoi*. Force of Nature, meanwhile, is called *sensei*. Being attacked by Force of Nature is referred to as "being disciplined by *sensei*." Other card nicknames include *jichan* or "grandpa" for the Prodigal Sorcerer, and *bonsai* for the Zuran Orb.

► Sponsored by Hobby Japan in May, Grand Prix-Tokyo was the largest **Magic** tournament to date, attracting 1,000 participants to the DCI Japan Tournament Center.



Sportsmanlike

Conduct: In Japan, a duel starts differently than in the United States. To determine who goes first, players use a method that's traditional whenever a fair, random decision is required—they play rock-paper-scissors. Just picturing the start of a Pro Tour Qualifier brings a smile.

That's not the only difference, of course. Before card sleeves were allowed, many Japanese players wore white gloves to protect the cards. In Japan, white gloves are worn at formal venues involving politics and ceremonies. Some players still wear white gloves to maintain the tradition, while others wear driving gloves to give the tradition a new twist. It gives the proceedings a strange air of formality.

Attitude Adjustment: In addition to small differences, there are big shifts in attitude. Trust is very high in Japan, and cheating is rare. For instance, at Grand Prix-Tokyo, a "Super Qualifier" for Pro Tour-New York, players put their decks in their pockets when they left for lunch. It would have been easy to buy some extra cards and slip them in, but in Japan, that type of thing just doesn't happen.

Last year in Osaka, a young man playing a white weenie deck won a trophy and a cash prize at a store tournament. His name went on the store's winner's board. But at home, the winner took apart his deck and discovered he was playing with three White Knights and five Order of Leitburs, while his deck list showed four of each. What did he do? He went back to the store, apologized profusely, gave the prize money and trophy back, called up the second-place winner and apologized, and went home. That's *gyazatteru* in Japan.

—Wolfgang Baur and Ron Foster



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STRAIGHT FROM THE START

by Melody Alder



If you're like many **Magic** players who are just starting out, you may be a little confused or intimidated by the whole organized play and tournament scene. It's not difficult to get involved, however, and once you know what to expect, it's easy to make the transition from playing **Magic** with friends and family to playing against new faces, new decks, and new competition.

Step Up to Organized Play

Wizards of the Coast has created several organized play programs, and two of them are especially well suited for newcomers looking to break into organized play: Arena—The League for **Magic: The Gathering** and the DCI. If you prefer meeting new people and playing for fun and cool prizes, Arena is for you. If you want competition, ranking, and possible fame in the **Magic** community, then you should play in DCI-sanctioned tournaments.

ENTER THE ARENA

Arena is definitely a casual play environment. Even though joining Arena gives you automatic membership in the DCI, Arena is a completely separate entity. While the DCI is a tournament-based organization, Arena is a league, and you can play anyone else in the league as long as you play at a league site during league hours. Over the course

of the thirty-eight-day season, you can play as many or as few players as you like. Top-rated players in each store get prizes at the end of the season based on their win-loss records and the records of their opponents. All players are eligible for prizes dis-

tributed at the store owner's discretion (for example, "Most Sportsmanlike").

Each season of Arena has a different play format. The Summer Season (July 18–August 24) format is Standard and introduces *Vanguard*. "Standard" means that you have to follow the DCI deck-construction rules for Standard tournaments; these rules tell you which cards you can and can't use in your deck. *Vanguard* is a brand-new supplement for **Magic** being debuted in Arena (see "The Bigger the Better" on page 68). The atmosphere is relaxed, so it's a great way to meet people who share your hobby.

DCI TYPES AND FORMATS

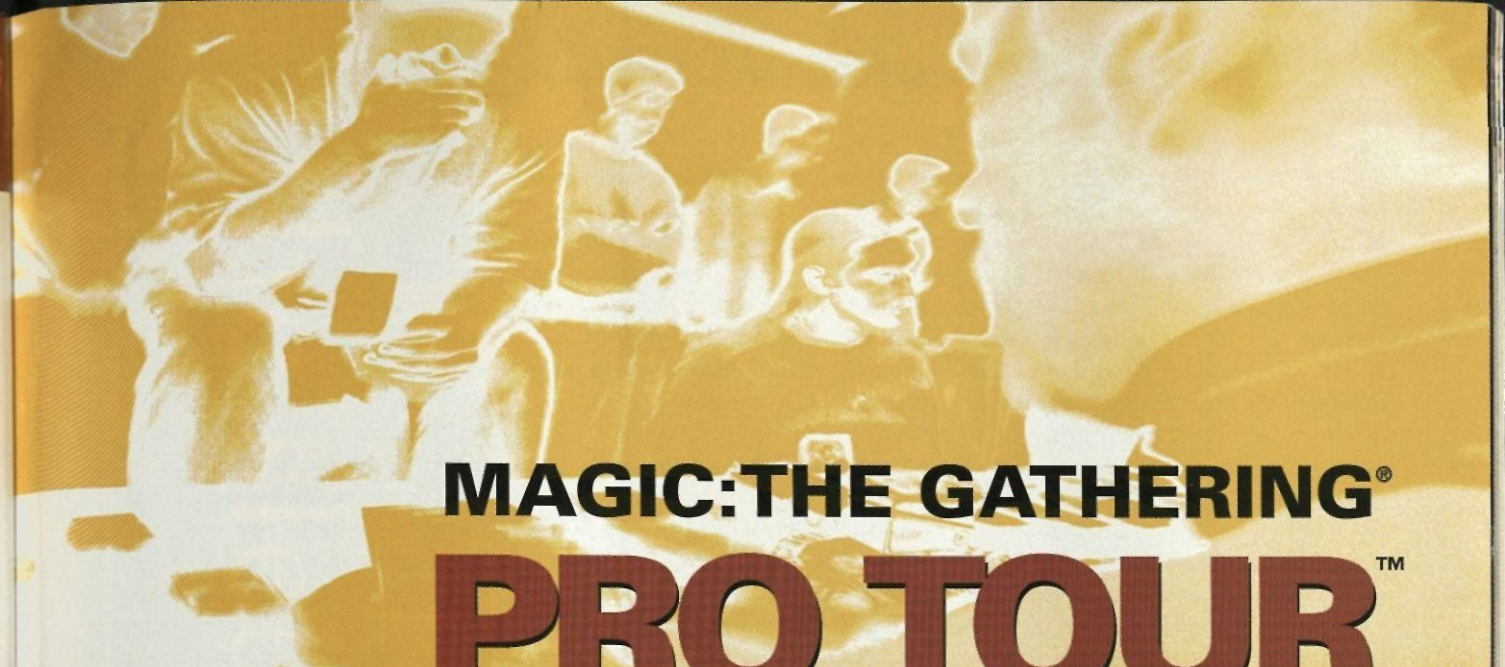
The DCI is more structured and competitive than Arena. Once you join, you have to seek out DCI-sanctioned tournaments in order to increase your rating—a numerical value reflecting your skill. Your rating is based on how you fare against others. For example, if you play against a person with a much higher rating and win, your rating will jump higher than if you had defeated a person with a similar or lower rating.

Once you're in the DCI, you can have ratings in four separate tournament formats: Standard (Type II), Classic (Type I), Extended, and Limited (Sealed Deck). What is commonly known as Classic-Restricted (Type 1.5) will be a subformat of Classic. Your ranking indicates how your rating compares within the total body of rated DCI members (first, second, 208th, and so on). As there are four rating categories, your ranking will probably differ between them.

The DCI allows several different pairing systems for sanctioned tournaments. If you're not sure how to construct decks for a given format, you can get deck construction rules out of *The Duelist*, from your tournament organizer, or from the DCI website. The following pairing options can be used in all the different tournament types.

Swiss: This is the most common pairing method for sanctioned tournaments in which participants play a predetermined number of rounds. In the first round, players are randomly matched





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ILLUSTRATION BY TED NAIBEL

for a best two-out-of-three match. Starting with the second round, players are paired according to their records. For example, if you lose your first match, in the second round you'll most likely play someone who lost his or her first match as well. This keeps the play balanced. At the end of the predetermined number of rounds, those players who did the best play against each other in single-elimination rounds to determine the winner. The final stage could include any number of players, depending on how big the tournament is, but usually it's four to eight.

Single Elimination: This is the hardest tournament format, unless you're accustomed to going undefeated. In single elimination, once you lose a match you're out of the tournament. Every round has only half the number of people playing as in the previous round until only one is left standing.

Double Elimination: This format is similar to single elimination, except you get two chances to lose a match instead of one. Double elimination tends to work best in tournaments with a small number of people.

Round Robin: In round robin, you play

three games with everyone in your group. After everyone has played each person in the group, the person with the best record becomes the winner. If there are enough participants, there will be more than one group and more than one group winner. The group winners then play each other to determine the champion.

PREPARING FOR A TOURNAMENT

Most competitors like to know ahead of time what deck types they may be facing, and they like to get a little practice in to fine-tune their skills. Obviously the best way to practice your play skills is to play. If you know an upcoming tournament involves constructing a deck using a *Fifth Edition* starter and two *Weatherlight* boosters, then you should practice by doing just that. Sometimes such practice is easier said than done, however. Many people don't have anyone to practice with, which is another reason for joining Arena. You should have no trouble finding someone in your Arena league who will practice with you. Most likely, several Arena members will want to prepare for the same tournament.

Knowing what decks you might face is

a little harder, especially if you don't have Internet access. *The Duelist* and *The Duelist Sideboard* often discuss the strategies behind popular deck types, and you can learn a lot just by reading these. Word of mouth can also be a good way to find out what people are going to be playing. If you do have Internet access, getting on the Wizards of the Coast website at <<http://www.wizards.com>> will link you to all kinds of up-to-date information. Usenet groups such as <rec.games.trading-card.magic.strategy> and <rec.games.trading-cards.magic.misc> are also useful. Once you know what deck types are going to be prominent, you can play one of those types, a modified version, or a deck designed to beat the prevailing deck type. Knowing what decks to expect will also help you build a more effective sideboard.

DEBUT TOURNAMENT

Don't expect to win your first tournament. Rather, use it as a learning experience, and don't be afraid to ask questions if you're not sure about something. That's partly why the judges are there. I've witnessed some of the best players in the world asking a judge a rules question before they did something. Also, don't be afraid to ask to read your opponent's cards. Very few players know what all the cards do, but I've seen people lose matches because they felt like they'd look stupid if they revealed that they didn't know what a card did.

And remember that losing doesn't equate with humiliation unless you make it so. In my first tournament, I got "kicked to the curb" (as the guys in R&D might say), partly because I had no idea what to expect. I didn't know what Swiss style was, and I certainly had never heard of making theme decks. But without that experience—as devastating as it was, since I thought I actually had a chance—I wouldn't have learned what all the terms meant, and I wouldn't have learned about what kinds of decks other people were playing. In a way, my first tournament was my preparation for future tournaments. Without that experience, I wouldn't have learned the next step to playing effectively, and having fun. ♦

Renaissance schoolmarm Melody Alder is a nicer person than most of us deserve to meet.



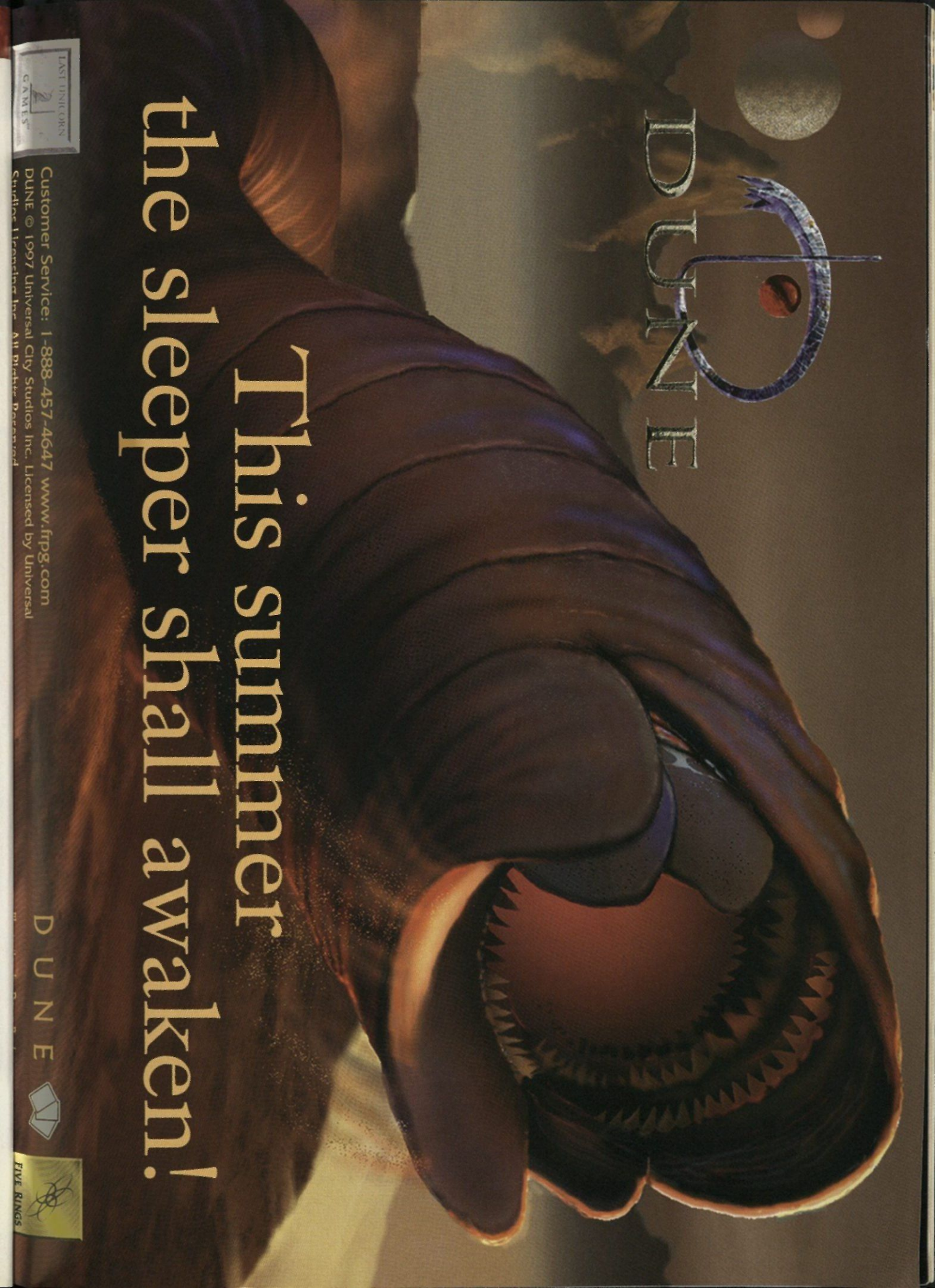
Where Do I Sign?

To join Arena, you first have to know where to find an Arena store near you. You can do that by calling Wizards of the Coast Customer Service at (206) 624-0933, by emailing <custserv@wizards.com>, or by visiting the Arena section of the Wizards website. This Summer season, the fee is \$5, and with that you'll receive an oversized alternate-art land card and a four-card pack of *Vanguard*.

Once you've joined Arena, you have an automatic Mana-level membership in the DCI. But you can also join the DCI independently by talking to a tournament organizer at an organized event, or by writing to <dcic@wizards.com> or DCI, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057. You can also call (800) 324-6496.

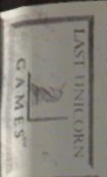
The DCI has two levels of membership. Mana membership is free, but you can also upgrade to Legend membership. New Legend members pay \$30 and receive a special membership card, two unique, playable **Magic** cards, a **Magic** poker deck, one booster pack of *Italian Legends*, one year of *The Duelist Sideboard* (six issues), and one commemorative 1997 World Championship limited-edition prepaid phone card (if you join before 9/1/97).

You can find out where sanctioned tournaments are being held in your area by calling or emailing Wizards Customer Service (see above), by looking at the events listings in *The Duelist Sideboard*, or by clicking on "leagues and tournaments" on the DCI website.

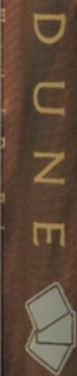


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DECK DECONSTRUCTION

by Beth "BethMo" Moursund



A new deck design leapt into prominence at Pro Tour-Paris in April, and if the buzzing on the Internet can be believed, it seems to be one of the most talked-about tournament deck types this summer. So, bowing to popular demand, we now bring you the "Prosperous Bloom" deck.

Prosperous Bloom

Prosperous Bloom draws its name from two of its key cards, Prosperity and Cadaverous Bloom. In a typical Bloom match, the Bloom player does next to nothing for three to five turns, and appears to be on the verge of losing. Then, in one turn, he or she plays a sequence of cards that feed on each other, recursively drawing more and more cards and building up a huge mana pool. The final, game-ending blow is a massive Drain Life, often cast from a zero or negative life position.

DECK FOUNDATIONS

Prosperous Bloom eventually wins with a single card, but it has several options to reach that point. Its design takes the "cluster deck" approach. Cluster decks use cards that combine with each other in multiple ways. A deck that relies on a single combination, conversely, can be defeated easily if one of the cards in the combination is removed or neutralized. Cluster decks are harder to stop, as they incorporate multiple methods for accomplishing their objectives.

Prosperous Bloom's cluster has four interlocking areas:

1. Mana production—to fuel everything. Cadaverous Bloom, Squandered Resources, and Natural Balance are all critical cards, and every design we've seen uses four of each.

2. Card drawing—to get cards into play initially, and then to fuel the Cadaverous Bloom mana production as the loop feeds on itself. Prosperity and Infernal Contract are the key cards here, and usually come in groups of four. Three Wishes is occasionally used to help get things rolling, even though its set-aside cards can't be discarded for Bloom.

"Just a gut reaction."

When asked to reinterpret Cadaverous Bloom, illustrator Alan Rabinowitz let it all hang out.

3. Card selection—to increase the odds of getting the necessary cards to set up combinations. Vampiric Tutor, Lim-Dúl's Vault, Impulse, and Mystical Tutor all fill this need directly. Elven Cache serves the same purpose once you've started to play the combinations, and also helps if an opponent is playing discard effects.

Every tournament Bloom deck we've encountered uses four Vampiric Tutors, but opinions on the rest of this cluster vary. Most decks include three to six in some assortment.

4. Prevention—to stop an opponent from throwing a wrench into the works. Any counterspells will work here; Memory Lapse, Arcane Denial, and Force of Will are favorites. We called this cluster "prevention" rather than "permission," though, because of City of Solitude, the other favorite. Some Bloom decks have no permission spells, relying on City of Solitudes to draw all the counterspells from an opponent's hand and to make any other interference impossible. Some designs also include discard effects, usually Coercion to remove anything an opponent could use to stop the combination from working.

Notice that we didn't include Drain Life as part of the cluster. The Bloom player doesn't need (or even want) to draw Drain Life until after finishing the combination. Often, the whole deck will have passed through the player's hand at that point, so only one is needed (especially if Elven Cache is in the deck). Most Bloom decks include two or three Drain Lifes for insurance against discard effects, and in case the Bloom player must start the combination too early to count on getting through the whole deck.

THE REST OF THE DECK

Choosing lands for a Prosperous Bloom deck is a balancing act. Three-color decks are vulnerable to mana problems at the beginning of a duel. Normally, deck designers try to make up for this by including lands that can produce more than one color of mana or that fetch appropriate color-producing lands. Prosperous Bloom, however, relies heavily on Natural Balance's ability to pull five basic lands from the library after sacrificing all lands in play to Squandered Resources. Putting too many nonbasic lands in the deck will interfere with this ability.



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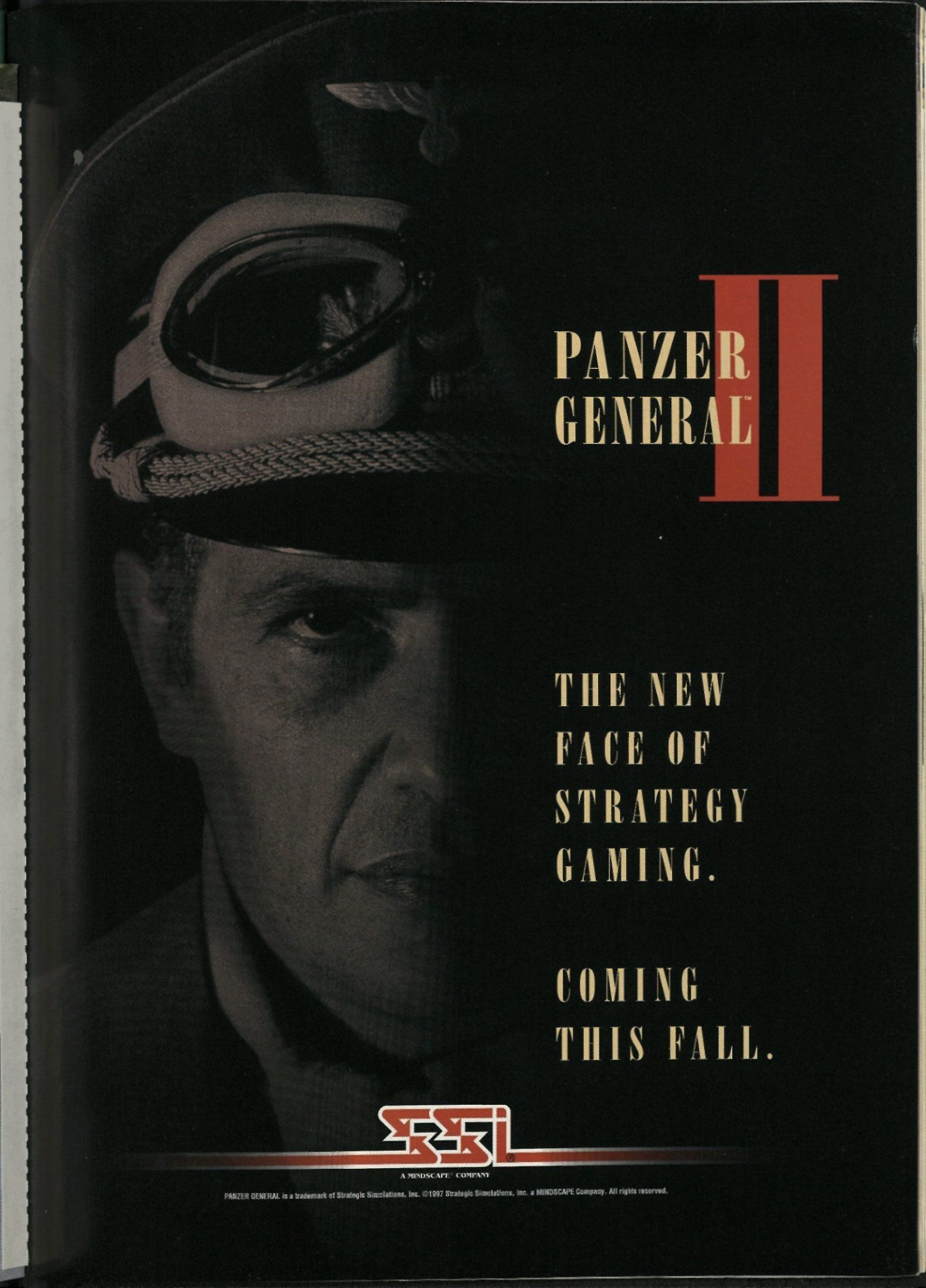


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Perfection in Paris

Many Prosperous Bloom decks were played at Pro Tour—Paris, which used a *Mirage-Visions Constructed* format. This winning deck, named “Wishing Well” by its co-creators, was designed by Mike Long and David Mills.

- 3 Bad River
- 4 Cadaverous Bloom
- 1 Drain Life
- 1 Elven Cache
- 1 Emerald Charm
- 7 Forest
- 4 Impulse
- 4 Infernal Contract
- 5 Island
- 2 Memory Lapse
- 4 Natural Balance
- 1 Power Sink
- 4 Prosperity
- 4 Squandered Resources
- 6 Swamp
- 1 Three Wishes
- 4 Undiscovered Paradise
- 4 Vampiric Tutor

SIDEBOARD

- 3 City of Solitude
- 4 Elephant Grass
- 1 Elven Cache
- 3 Emerald Charm
- 1 Memory Lapse
- 1 Power Sink
- 2 Wall of Roots



Most Bloom decks deal with this dilemma by including Undiscovered Paradise or City of Brass, but often leave out Underground River and Bad River. As for basic land, green mana is the most critical, as Natural Balance requires two green to cast.

After filling all of the cluster slots and choosing appropriate lands, there's very little room left in the deck for anything else. Wall of Roots is a favorite as it can help ward off a creature rush and supply a bit of extra green mana, possibly enabling Natural Balance to be cast a turn earlier. Emerald Charm provides a cheap defense against enchantments. Many designers, however, leave the specialized defenses to the sideboard, preferring to run a few more spells from the “prevention” category in the main deck.

PLAYING THE DECK

The final turn for a Prosperous Bloom deck is essentially always the same. It begins when the Bloom player has either Squandered Resources, Cadaverous Bloom, or both in play, and is holding enough of the other crucial cards to “go for it.”

The Bloom player starts by generating as much mana as possible, either by tossing all unneeded cards to the Cadaverous Bloom, or by tapping all lands and sacrificing them to Squandered Resources, or both. Then he or she casts Natural Balance for a new set of lands to tap and sacrifice. Any Infernal Contracts that may have been drawn will be cast at this time. Then the player spends nearly all available mana on a large Prosperity. The resulting draws should, if all goes well, provide another Prosperity and Natural Balance (as well as Squandered Resources or Cadaverous Bloom, to complete the combination if necessary).

Now the cycle can continue. Each card tossed to Cadaverous Bloom provides mana to draw two more cards on the next Prosperity. Soon the Bloom player's library is empty; he or she tosses a bunch of cards to the Bloom for black mana, and casts a whopping Drain Life.

During this final turn, it's critical to keep track of the amount of each color of mana floating in your mana pool. Many Bloom players carry a set of green, blue, and black dice, arranging them to show remaining mana. If you're playing in a formal setting, don't keep track in your head. If a dispute arises, the resulting mess will be impossible for a judge to fairly adjudicate.

When you start to go for it and cast your first Prosperity, make sure you don't paint yourself into a corner. If you don't have Cadaverous Bloom in play, leave yourself enough mana (either floating, or in the form of unused lands) to cast either

Bloom or Natural Balance or you'll wind up with a handful of cards and no mana to cast them. A cautious player will also leave one blue to start the next Prosperity; a less cautious player will count on drawing Natural Balance and the ability to fetch another island with it. If you start with Cadaverous Bloom but don't have Squandered Resources (or have Squandered Resources, but no Natural Balance to go with it), all you need to worry about is the blue. The cards you're about to draw will provide two green or black apiece.

Though the end result is always the same, playing styles differ in the turns prior to going for it. Some players prefer to avoid casting anything except card-retrieval spells until they're able to execute the entire combo in one turn. This minimizes an opponent's chance to interfere. Others will drop Squandered Resources as soon as possible, allowing them to go for it a turn earlier—or to draw more cards when they do—but at the risk of having Squandered Resources destroyed before it can be used.

In making this decision, consider what your opponent is playing. If you're up against a blazingly fast deck, you may not be able to afford the luxury of waiting that extra turn. Against a slower deck you can wait until you're statistically almost certain to draw the cards needed for your loop to work.

Your “prevention” cards involve similar decisions, especially if your opponent is playing blue. If you cast a City of Solitude early, it may fall easy prey to a Disenchant or Emerald Charm. If you don't, however, a counterspell against your first Prosperity (after you've sacrificed all your land or thrown away most of your hand) can be fatal. If you manage to avoid that pitfall, you'll have even more counterspell problems later until you do get City of Solitude out, as your first Prosperity will probably hand your opponent a Force of Will or two along with plenty of other blue cards. Make sure you have either a City of Solitude in play or a fair supply of your own counterspell ammunition as soon as possible. Even when you're not playing against blue, a Reverse Damage or Honorable Passage on the final Drain Life spells doom...and a Disenchant or Emerald Charm on your Bloom, cast in response to Prosperity, can be equally disastrous.

Anyone can play a Prosperous Bloom deck badly and still win a fair number of games. The mark of the superior player, however, is the ability to calculate the odds and predict an opponent's threats, thus knowing when to play enchantments early, when to hold them, and when to go for it. ♠

Beth Moursund spends way too much time thinking about Magic. But that's why we love her.



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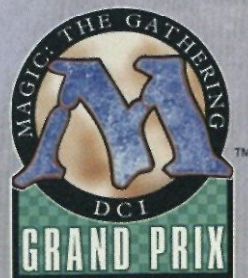
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by Robert Hahn



By the time this article sees print, the Standard (Type II) tournament scene will have changed dramatically once again, making 1997 the most volatile season in the history of **Magic**. The return of *Ice Age* with its two power cards—**Swords to Plowshares** and **Icy Manipulator**—is responsible for this latest upsurge.

Environmental Control

It's getting to the point where predicting the metagame is becoming a next-to-impossible task because there are so many viable options; each expansion introduces new power cards to a tournament scene already reeling with them. And with *City of Brass*, *Undiscovered Paradise*, *Gemstone Mines*, *Lotus Vale*, and the various painlands, we should see a lot more multicolor decks in the future, similar to the five-color green (5CG) deck (a deck that is predominately green but which includes some of the best cards from each color) that dominated the U.S. Regional tournaments.

However, some things about the **Magic** trading card game remain constant. In this period of change and chaos, it might prove beneficial to cover some of the basic concepts of **Magic**, starting with environmental control.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL?

Environmental control is one of the most basic concepts in higher-level **Magic** and yet one of the least understood. Most simply, environmental control means playing your game while preventing your opponent from playing his or her game. This is the ultimate goal of every control deck, no matter what the method of control—whether card-based like blue counter-magic, or resource-based like a prison deck.

No deck can ever win consistently if it allows the opponent to play unimpeded.

Consider a speed-green deck with nothing but creatures and land. Even this deck, which appears at first glance to be the antithesis of control, engages in environmental control because the opponent is

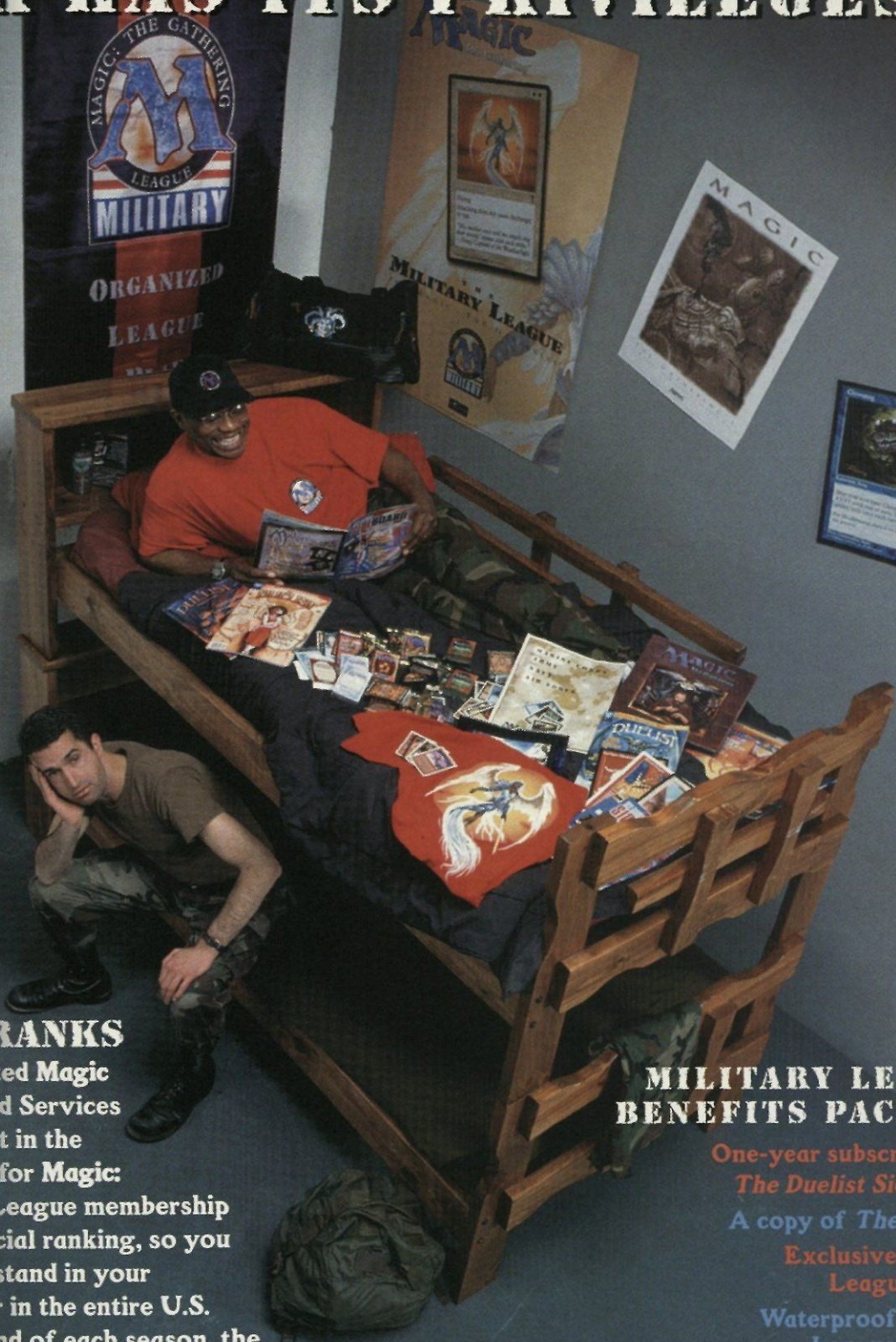
forced to defend or lose. Forcing opponents to be on the defensive prevents them from playing offensively, even when they have a fast and powerful deck. Making control a dominant factor in your deck may spell the difference between winning and losing.

Environmental control comes in three categories. *Card control* is most often described in terms of card advantage. This method essentially seeks to neutralize an opponent's cards with removal and counter-magic. With *resource control*, you seek to lock down or eliminate your opponent's resources, without concentrating on his or her offense. In most cases, the resource denied is mana, but sometimes it's cards in hand. Resource control is best exemplified by a prison deck and its variants. The last category is *time control*, sometimes thought of as a subset of resource control because many time-control decks control mana with *Winter Orb*. However, time-control decks don't restrict or eliminate mana resources to prevent an opponent from playing cards. Rather, they restrict or eliminate the window of opportunity in which to play cards. Some common time-control decks include *Forgotten Orb* (which uses the delaying tactics of counterspells and *Winter Orb* to grant more time to use your own cards), the 5CG decks, and the weenie-*Winter Orb* deck (which uses the "you-need-mana-and-I-don't" tactic).

HOW DOES ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AFFECT THE GAME?

Environmental control makes speed absolutely critical. In fact, in most cases it makes perfectly good sense to trade power for speed, because whatever you do, you must be able to do it early in the game before your opponent's own environmental control sets in. For example, a 4/4 islandwalking regenerator for 2♦♦♦ would certainly be more powerful than a *River Boa* (a 2/1 islandwalking regenerator for 1♦), but is it better? The answer is no, because it's slower. By the time you're able to cast it, you

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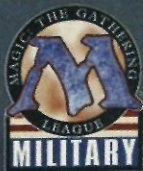
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could be facing an army of Black Knights and Fledgling Djinn, or your opponent could have an Icy Manipulator in play or a Wrath of God in hand with the mana to cast it. Such a card would be slow enough to fall victim to environmental control.

Environmental control also makes mana distribution absolutely critical. Mana distribution is the lifeblood of any environmental-control strategy, even if you don't have a fast deck. Slower control players

ronmental control, now that Icy Manipulator and Swords to Plowshares have returned, is resource control. Prison variants of all types are bound to have reappeared by now, many with global creature-stoppers like Wrath of God, Dream Tides, or Mudslide.

Even the few control decks left in this environment, like big blue (a counterspell deck with lots of flying creatures to "beat down" the opponent) will begin to incor-

Mana distribution is the lifeblood of any environmental-control strategy, even if you don't have a fast deck.

know this: if they cannot get the mana they need to establish control over cards, over resources, or even over time, they lose. But a speed deck also needs proper mana distribution to implement its environmental-control strategy: offensive pressure. A Sligh deck, for example, full of creatures with one- or two-mana casting cost, *may* work on a low-mana ratio, but it will *not* work on a high-mana ratio. In other words, drawing six mountains and Goblins of the Flarg, followed by four more mountains, probably means the Sligh player will lose that game. And it's not just because the player doesn't have the firepower necessary to inflict early damage. The reason, rather, is that by the time the Sligh deck starts to implement its strategy, the opponent will most likely have already taken control of the environment. And the Sligh deck relies on time control (via the initial rush of offense) for its environmental control. Losing that, it becomes hard to win the duel.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL IN THE CURRENT STANDARD ENVIRONMENT

The current Standard environment challenges control decks more than ever. The most important method in current Standard play is time control. The perfect example is the 5GC deck that uses fast, efficient creatures (River Boa, Whirling Dervish, and Maro) as combat troops, combined with time control (Arcane Denial, selective removal like Terror and Incinerate, plus Winter Orb and Armageddon).

The other important method of envi-

ronmental control, now that Icy Manipulator and Swords to Plowshares have returned, is resource control. Prison variants of all types are bound to have reappeared by now, many with global creature-stoppers like Wrath of God, Dream Tides, or Mudslide.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME CONTROL

Remember that time control differs from resource control. Compare a prison deck to a Forgotten Orb deck. A prison deck seeks environmental control by restricting *all* of an opponent's mana resources; it doesn't matter how long it takes as long as it achieves mana lockdown. A prison deck's play cards are almost completely dedicated to defense (via removal and countermagic) and environmental control. Time is not important, resources are.

A Forgotten Orb deck, on the other hand, doesn't care about the opponent's resources. It only cares about the window of opportunity during which an opponent might play a card that stops its own offensive onslaught, whether it be a blocker, Wrath of God, or Disk. Memory Lapsing a turn-four Wrath doesn't eliminate the threat, it merely delays it for a turn. However, that delay translates into another turn of damage. And with Winter Orb, the Forgotten Orb deck gains a tremendous window of opportunity for damage dealing—a minimum of two turns, as the opponent probably tapped out to cast something you ended up counterspelling.

Even if the opponent's Wrath of God is inevitable, it will take time the opponent does not have. In other words, resources (cards, mana, and so on) are not of the essence, time is.

Time control has become the most important method of environmental control because the current Standard scene demands offensive speed. Creature combat has become almost necessary with cards like Dense Foliage, which renders targeted creature control useless, and Teferi's Veil, which renders all non-instant creature control useless. Time control is also important because there are entirely too many ways to mess with slower, more defensive control decks, especially if they depend on enchantments or artifacts like Null Rod, City of Solitude, and Mana Web.

THE FUTURE ENVIRONMENT

Good players will adapt to the new environment and find ways to blend fast offense with environmental control, whether through card control, resource control, or time control. And with the current Standard environment, they will be assisted by the greatest color flexibility in the history of Standard Magic. It is possible that three-color decks will become commonplace and four- or five-color decks won't be unusual. Deck builders will be able to blend a predominantly green/white creature-geddon strategy with red and black removal and blue for selective countermagic or momentum-shifting cards such as Teferi's Veil or Ancestral Knowledge. Or they'll be able to blend traditionally opposing colors like black and green—black for selective creature control and green for Dense Foliage, Call of the Wild, bigger creatures, and so on. And we're sure to see a splash of red and white in this mix for Fervor, Disenchant, Abeyance, and Armageddon.

But the most common thread among all successful decks will be some form of environmental control. It will be interesting to see what forms of environmental control and what deck types become popular in Standard, but no matter what happens, the Standard environment will certainly never be boring. ♦

Writer Robert Hahn looks quite different from his picture in The Duelist.

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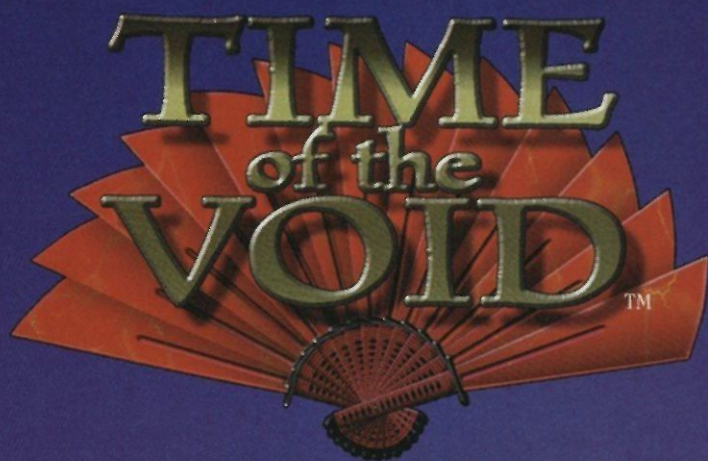
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MERCENARIES™

More Bang for Your Buck

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Storing all those cards for games I don't play anymore is getting to be a real pain. I'm no longer sure where to put them all. One night, after a little too much beer and BattleTech, I decided to stack all my unused boxes of trading card games into a series of pyramids and use them as part of a miniatures battle. My lance of Valkyries is still standing on a pile of unused *Ice Age* and *Homelands* cards. That's the way it is with the TCG market. Not long ago, those card sets were "hot new expansions." Now I use 'em for terrain.

With that in mind, I can understand anyone who's hesitant about investing in another TCG expansion. I'll admit, when I first saw the starter decks for BattleTech, I was skeptical. When I started playing, I felt like the game was incomplete. Now, months later, the first two expansions have done a lot to fill in the gaps and expand the game. I went nuts over *Counterstrike*, and when Wizards sent me the card list for *Mercenaries*, I was impressed. Players of the BattleTech TCG are going to be getting more bang for their buck.

Check It Out!

You don't need to be a graduate of the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy to figure out why this second expansion is called *Mercenaries*. Simply put, Inner Sphere decks are going to kick ass. I've seen newbie players latch on real quick to the way Mercenary cards were used in the basic set. Cards like Contract with Gray Death Legion and Contract with Wolf's Dragoons were massively useful. A little Mech that would normally hit the

Stockpile for 1 or 2 damage could suddenly wipe out five or six cards. A competent Mech that was about to get crushed in mass combat could soak up another 4 or 5 damage and survive.

The merc contract cards had two big weaknesses, though: there were only two of them and they were unique. Now there will be five more mercenary units—four of them unique—along with cards to untap them, recover them from your Scrapheap, and retrieve them from your Stockpile. This set features cards like Snord's Irregulars, 21st Centauri Lancers, and Northwind Highlanders. The next time you take on lances of Ryokens or barrages of Ghost Bear missile Mechs, you might want to hire on some of these crack mercenaries to get an edge.

Stay in Touch!

The mercs aren't the only new faction, however. This expansion introduces a new strategy for Universe deck-construction rules: the ComStar deck. In the BattleTech universe, the adepts of Com-

Star control communication throughout the Inner Sphere. By spreading information through their network of hyperpulse generators, they keep up on tactical situations throughout known space. For more on these guys, check out the article by Shawn Carnes on page 64.

ComStar cards will give you an edge in manipulating your deck and managing your resources better. One of the strongest cards in the set is Anastasius Focht, the Precentor Martial of ComStar. His diplomatic skills are so well-developed that once you get him in play, he can either tap a Clan 'Mech and untap an Inner Sphere 'Mech or tap an Inner Sphere 'Mech and untap a Clan 'Mech. As you can guess, that can really turn a battle around fast. Other notable ComStar cards include Hyperpulse Generator, which allows you to move around your opponent's construction counters; ComStar News Bureau, which gives extra resources to decks with Support: Politics; and the Grim Reaper, a classic ComStar 'Mech.

Anastasius is tough to beat, but the universe has no shortage of powerful personalities to go up against him. While the background for *Counterstrike* covered events from 3050 to 3052, *Mercenaries* includes 'Mechs and personalities that appear up to 3055. Cards like Sun-Tzu Liao (the new Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation), Omi Kurita (keeper of the family honor), Aletha Kabrinski of Clan Ghost Bear, and Vandervahn Chistu of Clan Jade Falcon help round out your decks and bring them up to date.

Fire It Up!

In a lot of current decks, people seem to rely pretty heavily on cards like 'Mech Hangar and Secured Drop Site to get extra deployments. After all, why should you only deploy two cards when you can bring out three or four? Here's my chance to tip you off on a particularly useful card in *Mercenaries*: Rapid Deployment. With this Command card, you can tap as many Resource cards as you want until the end of the turn and get an extra deployment each time. Weenie 'Mech decks are going to be nastier than ever.

That's just the beginning. A lot of players like to brag about the really big 'Mechs, but you may have noticed the growing legion of small 'Mechs. Take the Dart DRT-3S from the upcoming set, a fast little guy that doesn't inflict damage (but can still block) and deploys for a cost of 0. Now team it up with a card like Rapid Deployment. In no time at all, you'll be throwing out more Darts than a 10th-level AD&D character.

Of course, some players love monster 'Mechs. Here's a news flash: Watch out for the new unique 'Mechs. If you like Natasha Kerensky's attitude, you're going to love the Widowmaker card. It costs quite a bit to bring out Natasha's personal Daishi, but once it's out, it's nasty. Using Overheat, it can lash out for an amazing 19 damage. If you know the backstory up to 3055, you also know about Yen-Lo-Wang, the 'Mech that Justin Xiang Allard passed down to his son Kai. Now this King of the Nine Hells has its own card. My favorite card, however, has to be Rhonda's Highlander, the personal 'Mech of the leader of Snord's Irregulars.

These three 'Mechs have something else in common. Their reputation is so fierce that if one of them shows up on the battlefield, any 'Mech that opposes it gets -1 attack. It gets better, though—one of the funkiest cards in the expansion lets you add this ability to any 'Mech. You're going to have to check out Intimidating Paint Job. Customize a heavy 'Mech with wicked detailing and the 'Mechs it opposes also get -1 attack. Get a paint job for a whole lance and suddenly that huge 'Mech your opponent planned to crush you with is going to be in deep trouble!

Take It All!

Personally, I like the freakish 'Mechs best. Every set seems to have a few, and this one is no exception. The runner-up for weirdest 'Mech has to be the Salamander, which is so jam-packed with missiles that it actually bulges. I'm certainly not going to complain about the Missile 4 option, though. The oddest 'Mech in *Mercenaries*, though, is definitely the Behemoth, a four-legged lum-

bering "Stone Rhino" with lasers mounted in its snout. Funk-a-licious!

You may also notice some 'Mechs in this expansion that are just being introduced to the BattleTech universe. Glenn Elliott, one of the designers, has told me that they're called "second-line" 'Mechs, and they reflect the evolution of 'Mech design. Take the Mandrill, for instance. It's a 'Mech that led to the development of the Baboon HOWLER. Then there's the Corvis, the predecessor of the Ryoken STORMCROW. Even the 'Mechs have their own history. Now that's a backstory.

If you're a fan of the BattleTech universe, then you should also know about a special battle in the history of the Inner Sphere. Not only does this event have its own card in *Mercenaries*, but you can watch the battle unfold on the Web. (See Mike Selinker's sidebar on Hanover, page 61.) The characters in this promo from Wizards of the Coast are also featured throughout the flavor text for the expansion. Isis Polaris is a deadly targeting ace, Okada Nikei embodies the honor of House Kurita, and "E-Train" McNeill...well, you've got to visit the website to witness his horrible death. While you're at it, check out the rest of Wizards' BattleTech Web pages and read through the card lists for *Counterstrike* and *Mercenaries*.

Keep It Smooth!

Simply put, this expansion makes the game better than ever. If you like to play with Universe rules, you're going to see a lot more options for all of the Houses and Clans. And if you're a card game junkie—like I am—I think you'll wind up with a stack of cards that won't just get buried at the bottom of a massive pyramid in your basement. If you can afford to hire these 'Mechs and mercs, *Mercenaries* is worth the investment. I think I'm going to have to take a break from miniatures and play some more cards....

"Ace" Cyzyk lives in a basement apartment in Seattle, where he plays cards, drinks beer, and occasionally writes things down.



Paying the Cost to Be the Boss

How to Manage Your Mercenaries

by Mike Selinker, Glenn Elliott, Shawn F. Carnes, and Paul Peterson

Hello and welcome to the Mercenary Relations Division. Here at the MRD, we strive to give our customers everything they need in the way of full-bore firepower, on time and under budget! Glenn here will give you the upside of our most ambitious package deal, and Shawn—well, Shawn will discuss some of our less ambitious plans. After all, here at the MRD, an educated customer is a quality customer.

Boys?

GLENN: Hi there! Check out the deck on page 62. It's got bells, it's got whistles, it's got—heck, it's got everything! But you've got to read the fine print, or you're going to get our people killed. And if you think it's expensive to rent 'em, think about what it costs to replace 'em.

To get the best effort out of your MechWarriors, and especially mercenaries, you need to know what makes them tick. The same is true of this *Mercenaries* deck, so that's what we're going to cover in this briefing. By the time we're done, you'll know the proper way to use its advantages and hide its disadvantages.

The *Mercenaries* deck follows a fairly standard ratio of cards, with twenty-six 'Mechs, twenty-five resources, and nine miscellaneous cards. So on the surface, you'd probably guess that there are no surprises here, right? Close, but not quite. Seven of the cards are unique mercenary contracts. Now, before you start thinking you can't afford so many of our fine divisions, consider the—

SHAWN: That's what I like about you, Glenn, always hawking for the maximum commission. Dear customer, I'd like you to consider a lower mercenary complement, say, one or two mercenary contracts. Glenn here would have you clog your deck with seven. Is there, maybe, a lack of confidence? Those seven mercs could easily be replaced with more worthwhile cards, like, say...missions?

Glenn's strategy uses Tactics, yet there are no Mission cards in the deck; any change of circumstance in the middle of combat will surely be against you. No last-minute pushes or evasive maneuvers for you, my friend. Your mercenaries, all seven of them, are your sole source of combat modification. You've got no sur-

prise element, with the cost of a card, a deployment, and continual resource drain for each Merc. *Bon appetit!*

Exactly what kind of combat modifications will all these mercs provide, you ask? Well, they do give 'Mechs a boost in battle, but for the commander who fails to pay the ① ②P cost to keep each contract going, they will only provide the enemy with more firepower. It really starts to add up—especially if you find yourself without Politics in play. Now, what could you be using these resources for if you weren't spending them on mercenaries? How about, I don't know... 'Mechs?

GLENN: Now, Shawn, don't be chasing away my customer. All the 'Mechs are pretty cheap. Only four of them cost four or more resources, and the majority of them cost one or two. Cheap 'Mechs like these are easy to deploy and will give you an advantage early in the game, and that's when you want to be winning. This deck is designed to hit fast and hard so your opponent never has a chance to recover. If the game starts to drag on, your 'Mechs are going to start looking pretty weak compared to your opponent's.

These merc contracts are beautifully specialized, for you, the educated consumer. Contract with Eridani Light Horse—hired only by a little old MechWarrior on Sundays, mind you—is going to let the air out of your opponent's Saturation Bombings before they get any steam. But they're not gonna do you any good if they're just sitting behind the lines waiting for enemy attacks.

So my advice to you, the customer, is: Attack, attack, attack! You'll normally have a large 'Mech advantage early in the game, so make good use of it. If you can't hit your opponent's Stockpile, go for the

Resources. But don't sit around, because those mercenaries are expensive. Hire 'em and send 'em into battle!

SHAWN: So where are the real 'Mechs? The ones selected for these mercenaries are perhaps better suited to some backwater planetary defense. There are two Zeuses and one Black Knight, but that's certainly not enough to stand up against the likes of the Clans, let alone a competent Inner Sphere opponent. It's a Davion deck, but where is the big, beefy Banshee? It costs 8 (2A), but it's worth every resource. It has an armor/structure of 3/9, which far outweighs anything this deck sports. The 5 attack is nothing to snicker at either, with the potential to go up to a whopping 8 if you use Overheat. Now that's some firepower! You might have the resources to build this assault monster with a couple of contracts, but with seven contracts, you just don't have the goods. Now, I can certainly understand not trusting mercenaries with a valuable Banshee, but allowing them to wander about in relatively fragile Jagermechs and Blackjacks is tantamount to murder.

GLENN: Oh, hardly. Look, why buy a high-end 'Mech when you can get the same results out of a used Spider with a great pilot? These merc contracts are going to turn those "fragile" 'Mechs into monsters. Look what some of these contracts are doing: eliminating armor on opposing 'Mechs, scrapping cards under construction, sending scrapped 'Mechs back to your Stockpile. Oh yes, and adding tons of armor and attack to your 'Mechs.

And your resources will make your contracts stand up longer than Shawn might expect. Black Market Connections and Mercenary Relations Division allow you to retrieve lost cards from your Scrapheap, so you can cycle through contracts. Be careful, though—these are great cards, but they can also be your downfall. You shouldn't use them until you have drawn and used two to four

contracts, because recycling slows down your 'Mech production. Use them as resources to build 'Mechs until you have enough other resources in play to free them up for their alternate uses.

Of course, if you need the resources, this recycling mechanism allows you to let the contracts go whenever you want. You can even deploy and sacrifice one each turn if that's your cup of tea. After all, if

your opponent isn't playing Politics, any contract he or she picks up will cost three resources to avoid giving it back to you.

SHAWN: Glenn, I'd like to thank you for mentioning the resource complement. On the surface, twenty-five resources seems adequate. When you look closer, however, the cracks begin to show. Eleven Assembly, three Politics, and two Tactics provide a reliable source

Last Stand at Hanover



"The battle of Hanover is our Thermopylae, our Agincourt, our Tukayyid. We may have lost, but we lost far better than our foes could have imagined."

— Coordinator Theodore Kurita, at the dedication of the Hanover Memorial, 3055

In July of 3050, a pivotal battle rages on Hanover, a planet in the Pesht District of House Kurita's Draconis Combine. The outcome of the battle is never in doubt. It cannot change the outcome of the war. But it will live in the annals of Kurita history forever.

Chronicled in the Wizards Web

game *BattleTech: Last Stand at Hanover*, the battle pits an outmanned and outgunned echelon of Kurita MechWarriors against the unknown power of Clan Smoke Jaguar. A raging blizzard pins down the warriors, hampering communications and protecting secret Clan encampments. The Hanover command posts are shattered by artillery, and the Jaguars are poised to devastate the population center of Pearl City. Only clever tactics and an eye for detail will keep the Hanover militia alive long enough to hold off the Clan advance. Only you, as their commander, can help them survive.

In the *Mercenaries* expansion for *BattleTech*, you'll again encounter the MechWarriors who survived the fighting in the snow-capped mountains of Hanover. Half a decade later, the surviving warriors reflect on the battle that nearly cost them their lives. Missile ace Isis Polaris, kamikaze MechWarrior Okada Nikei, stoic Taeko Mifume, and speed demon Demosthenes "E-Train" McNeill will guide you through the card set. And when you pit the *Spiders* of the Inner Sphere against the *Gladiators* of the Clans, you too can experience the power of a heroic sacrifice with the Mission card Last Stand at Hanover.

But that's only if they survive. And that's only if you lead them.

Take the reins of command. Hanover awaits your orders.

—Mike Selinker

Try your skills in battle. Check out *BattleTech: Last Stand at Hanover* at http://www.wizards.com/Web_Fun/DCMS/Welcome.html.

from which to draw. Think Tank gives a resource too, till you scrap it for a needed asset; if we count that anyway, that leaves seventeen resources free and clear.

The remaining eight Resource cards, however, just give aid to the resource-sucking mercenaries. They actually cost resources to bring into play! Now, I am not opposed to paying for some resources that provide worthwhile benefits, but eight of them seem a bit much. What exactly are you get-

turn. Early in the game, you'll probably be happier with another 'Mech, but the contracts are going to be very appealing later.

But our customer here is one smart cookie, am I right? You'll be monitoring your resource usage closely. Sacrifice a Mercenary contract in order to free up a resource. Delay paying for a resource as long as possible. And most of all, don't hire mercenaries until you're ready to use them, which should be no sooner than the middle of the game. You're going to think carefully about your options—do

right? I mean, you do value your source of income, right?

SHAWN: Well, of course I do. I love mercenaries—in moderation. Especially the best ones. And that brings me to my last point. Where in this vaunted deck are the best mercenaries available in the Inner Sphere—Wolf's Dragoons? They have their own 'Mechs, for cryin' out loud! The Imp, a massive hundred-tonner, is impressive by itself. I'd be willing to abandon the Davion forces just to get the Imp, which fits well with Contract with Wolf's Dragoons. After all, why buy a bunch of low-end contracts from Glenn when you could just as well pick up the top of the line from me?

GLENN: You have to admit the Dragoons are a trifle expensive. But hey, play with them if you like. I'm working to make your life better.

SHAWN: Uh-huh. Look, here's my advice to you, the customer. Managing a conflict in the hectic world of the 3050s is not something to take lightly. The command chair requires attention to detail as well as battlefield management. Why rest your whole strategy on mercenaries who would turn on you quicker than they could cash a C-note? If you want something done right, do it yourself. Don't rely on all those mercenaries to do a Mech-Warrior's job. Buy just the contracts you need and leave the rest alone.

GLENN: I couldn't agree more. Of course, our mercenaries would never sell you out, right Shawn?

SHAWN: Oh, indubitably. I just get caught up in the heat of the moment sometimes. Take anything I say with a container of salt.

Hey, now that's what I like to see—my salespeople agreeing on everything. You did agree on everything, right, guys?

SHAWN and GLENN: You can count on us, boss.

So...have we made the sale?

Mike, Glenn, Shawn, and Paul designed Mercenaries, and Charlie led the development of the expansion. Each of them has included a maintenance cost of ① ②P in their R&D contracts.



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA WALD

Mercenary Deck

Inner Sphere/Davion

Deck design by Charlie Catapult

Resources (25)

- 1 Black Market Connections
- 1 ComStar Support*
- 3 Mercenary Relations Division*
- 3 Outreach Mercenary Training*
- 11 Support: Assembly
- 3 Support: Politics
- 2 Support: Tactics
- 1 Think Tank

'Mechs (26)

- 3 Blackjack BJ2
- 1 Black Knight BL6-KNT
- 4 Centurion CN9-D
- 3 Hatchetman HCT-5S
- 4 Jagermech JM6-DD
- 1 Lancelot LNC25-01
- 6 Mongoose MON-66
- 2 Stealth STH-1D*
- 2 Zeus ZEU-9S

Other Commands (9)

- 1 Contract with Black Thorns*
- 1 Contract with Eridani Light Horse*
- 1 Contract with Gray Death Legion
- 1 Contract with Kell Hounds
- 1 Contract with Northwind Highlanders*
- 1 Contract with Snord's Irregulars*
- 1 Contract with 21st Centauri Lancers*
- 1 Rhonda Snord*
- 1 Sharilar Mori*

* from Mercenaries

ting? Outreach Mercenary Training gets you both Politics and Tactics, but at the cost of a resource. And then there are those Mercenary Relations Divisions you love so much, Glenn. They allow you to bring Mercenary cards back to your hand, but then you have to pay for the contract again and deal with the resource drain—again. While you're doing this contract shuffle, the average opponent will be using deployments to bring out efficient Resource cards and, more importantly, 'Mechs. A contract will mean little if you're outnumbered in the 'Mech department. You'd probably prefer to get out just one contract and use it as long as it lasts—which is the option I'd prefer for our customer here.

GLENN: Well, I'll grant you that if you're not playing smart, this'll kill you. And I'll even grant you that it's a pain to pay for those mercenary contracts every

you *really* need to play that resource now, or can it wait? That's why you aren't going to fall into Shawn's pit traps.

SHAWN: Unless, of course, you're playing someone who's as smart as you. Look at some of my options against this deck. I can use Assassination to pop those unique contracts, and the new Protection Racket to add ① ②P to the maintenance cost of each unique card. Death Commando Strike is also good in a pinch to scrap those contracts. I can use Myndo Waterly, the "retired" ComStar Primus, to tap all of your Politics-providing Resource cards. And I might just be playing with Politics myself, in which case I'll have a field day when you let those contracts swing over to my side.

GLENN: Now, Shawn, you're a loyal employee of the Mercenary Relations Division. You're certainly not telling me you'd never want to use mercenaries,

Meet some of the finest freelancers in the anything-goes world of 3055



give a 'Mech +2 to attack and +3 armor. If Contract with Northwind Highlanders gets scrapped from play, you restock it instead.

Eridani Light Horse

"It's like Daddy always said, 'A big gun speaks for itself, but some folks still need an interpreter.'"

—Isis Annemarie Polaris, ex-Kurita pilot, now of the Light Horse

The Unit: The premier recon mercs, they employ devastating long-range firepower to perfection. They'll mix it up close if they have to,

Northwind Highlanders

"Frankly, I'd sooner gut my 'Mech than hear those bagpipes play 'Scotland Forever' again. But I do like watching our enemies run when they hear it."

—Chastity Mulvaney, Northwind Highlanders

The Unit: Forged on the planet of Northwind in the days of the Star League, the Highlanders fought for House Liao until House Davion bribed them to abandon their posts in the Fourth Succession War. They're now independent, whether Liao wants it or not.

The Card: The Highlanders



but few opponents get that chance.

The Card: One of your 'Mechs gets +2 attack and +2 armor, as well as the ability to scrap any card it damages in your opponent's Under Construction region.



Snord's Irregulars

"Rhonda knew gaudy pink was no color for a 'Mech. Unless you've been taught to fear pink."

—ComStar mercenary field report

The Unit: Why would Rhonda Snord leave the Clans and follow her father, Cranston, into mercedom? Honor? Money? Revenge? Hardly. Rhonda's pink 'Mech says it all: She did it for rock-and-roll. Her wild bunch became one of the greatest and most unpredictable merc units in the Inner Sphere.

The Card: One of your 'Mechs gets +2 attack and +3 armor. If that 'Mech gets scrapped, Contract with Snord's Irregulars lets you put it on top of your Stockpile instead of into the Scrapheap.

Black Thorns

"I see before me da Gladiator lie. Man, dat Byron, he gotta quote fer every occasion, ah?"

—Hawg, Black Thorns MechWarrior

The Unit: One of the few units assembled in the wake of the Clan War, the Black Thorns are usually posted along the north border of the Inner Sphere. This offshoot of the Northwind Highlanders has been known to hire some unstable MechWarriors, but they get the job done.

The Card: Contract with Black Thorns gives one of



your 'Mechs an unpredictable bonus: +(1-6) attack and +(1-6) armor.

21st Centauri Lancers

"We work for whoever treats us with class. When we get mistreated, we say so—loudly and often."

—Lancer Colonel Evelena Haskell

The Unit: The Lancers fled from House Liao's St. Ives Cavalry, back before St. Ives migrated to the Davion realm. They became one of the best mercenary units ever, working for anyone who pays—except the Liao, of course.

The Card: Tap Contract with 21st Centauri Lancers and choose one of your 'Mechs. All your forces in that mission ignore the armor of every 'Mech they encounter.

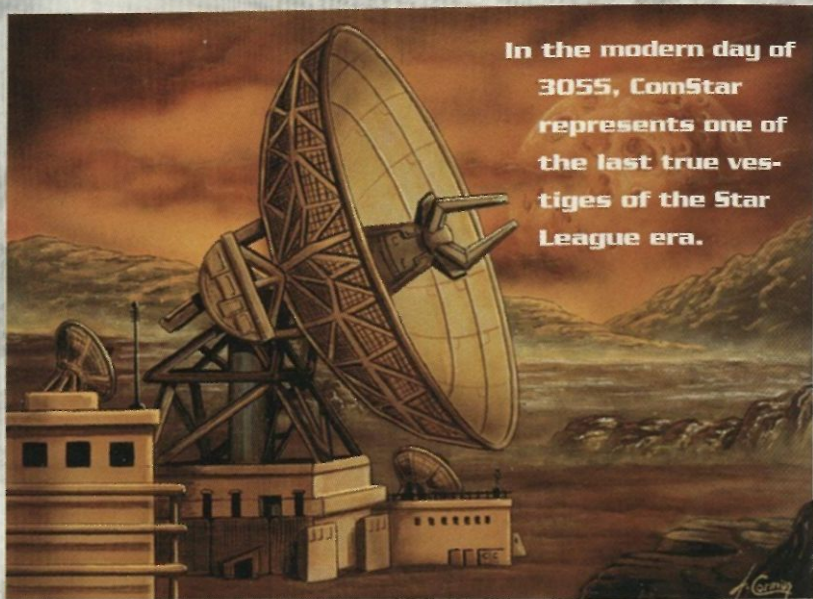
—M.S.



ComStar for the Modern-Day MechWarrior

ComStar is one of the most enigmatic forces operating within the Inner Sphere, and certainly one of the most dangerous. Developed in 2785 by Jerome Blake from the Department of Communications of the original Star League, ComStar maintains a stranglehold on communication via devices known as hyperpulse generators, or HPGs. HPGs are located on almost every planet throughout the Inner Sphere, and only from these devices can information be sent through the void of space, many times faster than the speed of light. This is technology from the Star League era, rare and irreplaceable. Few other avenues of communication exist in the BattleTech universe of 3055. Equally irreplaceable are the skills to operate HPGs, so ComStar wields immense power. Every faction in the Inner Sphere requires communication, and almost all are willing to deal with ComStar to get it.

In the modern day of 3055, ComStar represents one of the last true vestiges of the Star League era. With this status, however, has come a neo-Dark Age mentality inside ComStar itself; pursuit of skill and knowledge has been replaced with crypto-religious pomp and circumstance. All of



In the modern day of 3055, ComStar represents one of the last true vestiges of the Star League era.

ILLUSTRATION: AUDREY CORNAN

ComStar's activities are shrouded in rites and rituals, mainly stemming from Jerome Blake's successor, Conrad Toyama. Such rituals not only give an eerie mystique to the workings of ComStar, but also hide the true technological abilities of ComStar from the prying eyes of the Houses of the Inner Sphere. The Houses of the Inner Sphere do not have the skills and technology to maintain HPG tech and so are forced to yield to ComStar's ritualistic nature.

ComStar totes a banner of neutrality in

the conflicts that rage within the Inner Sphere, and its stated goal has been the protection and salvation of humanity from the ravages of the Successor Wars. Recently, however, neutrality has not been enough. ComStar defeated the Clans at the Battle of Tukayyid, halting their advance to Terra for fifteen years. Playing the other side of the cosmic fence, ComStar simultaneously launched Operation Scorpion, an unsuccessful move to seize control of the worlds of the Inner Sphere, whether occupied by House or Clan. The ensuing chaos caused a schism within ComStar, splitting it into a "reformed" faction and the religiously militant Word of Blake sect, currently in exile in the Free Worlds League.

You may be asking yourself, "What does this mean to me, the MechWarrior?" Good question! With the release of *Mercenaries*, you could face agents of ComStar on the field of battle, as they can be played by any Inner Sphere player. "To know your ally is to know your enemy," a great MechWarrior once said, and in that spirit we take a look at some of the key modern-day ComStar elite you may encounter.

— Sharon F. Carnes

COMSTAR ELITE



Anastasius Focht

Title: Precentor Martial, ComStar
Accomplishments: Orchestrator of the Tukayyid accords, leader of the Com Guard forces at Tukayyid, grand co-reformer of ComStar

The Card: Focht can untap an Inner Sphere Mech while tapping a Clan Mech, or vice versa. This has potentially dangerous ramifications in Inner Sphere-Clan battles if Focht is on the wrong side of the political fence.



Sharilar Mori

Title: Precentor Dieron, ComStar
Accomplishments: Grand co-reformer of ComStar,

leader of the new ComStar

The Card: Mori's opponent gets -1 initiative while she's in play, essentially negating Tactics and severely hampering the opponent's battles.

Myndo Waterly

Title: Primus, ComStar (retired)
Accomplishments: Orchestrator of Operation Scorpion, "retired" for the benefit of ComStar

The Card: Waterly's attempt to seize control of the Inner Sphere is reflected in her ability to tap an opponent's cards that provide the Politics Resource and prevent them from untapping during the next untap phase—all for the cost of one of your own resources.



Card List

CARD TITLE	KEYWORDS	ARTIST	RARITY
1 Access to Extra Munitions	Command-Enhancement	Thomas Millorn	C
2 Albatross ALB-3U	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Lee M. Fields	R
3 Aletha Kabrinski	Command-Unique-Clan-Ghost Bear	William Simpson	R
4 Ammo Truck	Command	Chris Trevas	U
5 Anastasius Focht	Command-Unique-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Tony Roberts	C
6 Anvil ANV-3M	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Sam Wood	U
7 Apollo APL-1M	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Tom Wänerstrand	C
8 Artillery Bombardment	Command-Inner Sphere	Franz Vohwinkel	C
9 Assault 'Mech Specialists	Command-Resource-Inner Sphere	Zina Saunders	U
10 Assault on the Rear Echelon	Command	Doug Chaffee	C
11 Baboon Howler	'Mech-Clan-Jade Falcon	Tom Kyffin	R
12 Batchell	Mission	Romas	R
13 Behemoth Stone Rhino	'Mech-Clan-Omni-Smoke Jaguar	Mark Tedin	R
14 Berserker BRZ-AS	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Ted Naifeh	R
15 Booty Cache	Command-Resource	David Deltick	R
16 Com Guest Response Team	Mission-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Thomas Millorn	C
17 ComStar Investment	Command-Resource-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Janet Hamlin	U
18 ComStar News Bureau	Command-Resource	Franz Vohwinkel	R
19 ComStar Support	Command-Resource-Inner Sphere	Pat Morrissey	C
20 ComStar Technicians	Command-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Mike Jackson	U
21 Contract with 21st Centauri Lancers	Command-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Doug Chaffee	R
22 Contract with Eridani Light Horse	Command-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	David Deltick	R
23 Contract with Northwind Highlanders	Command-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Christina Wald	U
24 Contract with Snord's Irregulars	Command-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Janet Aulisio	R
25 Contract with Black Thorns	Command-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Janine Johnston	R
26 Corvix	'Mech-Clan	Dom!	C
27 Dart DRT-3S	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Ted Naifeh	U
28 Difficult Terrain	Command-Enhancement	Kevin McCann	C
29 Disguised Coordinates	Command-Subterfuge	Zak Plucinski	C
30 Disrupted Supply Lines	Mission	Tom Kyffin	U
31 Dr. Ariel Reed	Command-Unique-Inner Sphere	Pat Morrissey	R
32 Expert Negotiating Team	Command-Inner Sphere	Jock	U
33 First Circuit Summons	Command-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Janine Johnston	U
34 Grand Titan T-HT-N10M	'Mech-Inner Sphere	Doug Chaffee	C
35 Grim Reaper GRM-R-PR29	'Mech-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Doug Chaffee	C
36 Gunslinger GUN-1ERD	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Kurita-Steiner	Simon Harrison	U
37 Hammer HMR-3M	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Jeff Laubenstein	C
38 Hellhound Conjurer	'Mech-Clan-Jade Falcon	Doug Chaffee	U
39 Hercules HRC-LS-9000	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Mark Poole	U
40 Hermes II HER-5S	'Mech-Inner Sphere	Dave Seeley	C
41 Hidden Reserves	Command	Jock	C
42 High-Profile Target	Command	Chris Trevas	U
43 Hohiro Kurita	Command-Unique-Inner Sphere-Kurita	Zina Saunders	R
44 Huron Warrior HUR-WO-R4L	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Liao	Jock	C
45 Hyperpulse Generator	Command-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Audrey Corman	R
46 Intimidating Paint Job	Command-Enhancement	Dermot Power	U
47 Jackal JA-KL-1532	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Liao-Marik	Patrick Beel	C
48 Kraken Bane	'Mech-Clan-Jade Falcon	Chippy	U
49 Last Stand at Hanover	Mission-Inner Sphere	Ted Naifeh	U
50 Linebacker B	'Mech-Clan-Omni-Wolf	Kevin McCann	C
51 Linebacker Prime	'Mech-Clan-Omni	Kevin McCann	C
52 Mandrill	'Mech-Clan	David Seeley	R
53 Maskirovka Headquarters	Command-Inner Sphere-Liao	Janine Johnston	U
54 'Mech Rotation	Command	Tony Roberts	C
55 'Mech Trap	Command-Subterfuge	Dermot Power	C
56 Mercenary Commission Contacts	Command	Janet Hamlin	U
57 Mercenary Contract	Command-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Mike Raabe	C
58 Mercenary Relations Division	Command-Resource-Inner Sphere	Janine Johnston	C
59 Myndo Waterly	Command-Unique-ComStar-Inner Sphere	D. Alexander Gregory R	
60 Naga Prime	'Mech-Clan-Omni	Randy Asplund-Falth	U
61 Nekisami Sabotage	Command-Subterfuge-Inner Sphere	Chippy	U
62 Nightsky NGS-4S	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Clifford Upp	U
63 Omi Kurita	Command-Unique-Inner Sphere-Kurita	D. Alexander Gregory R	
64 Outreach Mercenary Training	Command-Resource-Inner Sphere	Christina Wald	C
65 Penetrator PTR-4D	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Dermot Power	U

CARD TITLE	KEYWORDS	ARTIST	RARITY
66 Phantom C	'Mech-Clan-Omni-Wolf	Charles Gillespie	U
67 Phantom D	'Mech-Clan-Omni-Wolf	Charles Gillespie	U
68 Phantom Prime	'Mech-Clan-Omni	Charles Gillespie	C
69 Pouncer C	'Mech-Clan-Omni-Wolf	Pete Venters	C
70 Pouncer Prime	'Mech-Clan-Omni	Pete Venters	C
71 Protection Racket	Command-Inner Sphere-Liao	Doug Chaffee	R
72 Rapid Deployment	Command	Kelly D. Krantz	C
73 Reactor Breach	Mission	Romas	R
74 Redjack Ryan	Command-Unique-Periphery-Inner Sphere	Zina Saunders	R
75 Relentless Assault	Mission	Dave Seeley	U
76 Repair Facility	Command-Resource	Patrick Beel	C
77 Rhonda Snord	Command-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	David Roach	R
78 Rhonda's Highlander HGN-732	'Mech-Unique-Mercenary-Inner Sphere	Janet Aulisio	R
79 Salamander PPR-5S	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	David Seeley	R
80 Sandhurst Royal Military Academy	Command-ComStar-Inner Sphere	Pat Morrissey	U
81 Scarabus SCB-9A	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Lee M. Fields	R
82 Sharilar Mori	Command-Unique-ComStar-Inner Sphere	David Roach	R
83 Snake SNK-1V	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Liao	Dermot Power	C
84 Stealth STH-1D	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Davion-Steiner	Colin MacNeil	C
85 Strip Mining Operation	Command-Resource	Mike Raabe	C
86 Sun-Tzu Liao	Command-Unique-Inner Sphere-Liao	Janet Aulisio	R
87 Tactical Advantage	Mission	Sam Wood	C
88 Taking the Hit	Mission	R. Kane-Ferguson	C
89 Targeting Ace	Command	Colin MacNeil	U
90 Tempest TMP-3M	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Marik	Chippy	C
91 Thunder THR-1L	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Liao	Mark Poole	C
92 Tracking System Failure	Command-Enhancement	Christopher Rush	U
93 Transportation Delay	Command	Doug Chaffee	C
94 Underworld Connections	Command-Inner Sphere	Janet Aulisio	C
95 Unopposed	Mission	Kelly D. Krantz	C
96 UrbanMech IIC	'Mech-Clan	Mike Jackson	C
97 Vandervahn Chistu	Command-Unique-Clan-Jade Falcon	D. Alexander Gregory R	
98 Venom SDR-9K	'Mech-Inner Sphere-Kurita	Andrew Hepworth	U
99 Widowmaker Dalshi Dire Wolf	'Mech-Unique-Clan-Omni-Wolf	Joel Biske	C
100 Wyvern IIC	'Mech-Clan	Colin MacNeil	R
101 Yen-Lo-Wang CN9-YLW	'Mech-Unique-Inner Sphere-Davion-ST. Ives	Simon Gurr	R



ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE JACKSON

FASA Art Director: Jim Nelson
 FASA Assistant Art Director: Joel Biske
 Marketing Coordinator: Casey Brebberman
 Promotions Coordinator: Lara Dalch
 Public Relations: Steve Kam
 Print Purchasing: Sid Davis, Donna Woodcock
 Typesetting: Paul Allen Timm

Credits

BattleTech TCG Design: Richard Gerfield

Mercenaries Design Team: Glenn Elliott, Shawn F. Carnes, Paul Peterson, Mike Selinker, Tom Wylie

Mercenaries Development Team: Charlie Cabino, Glenn Elliott, Tom Wylie, Robert Gutschera

R&D Oversight (WoTC): Jim Lin

BattleTech Created By: Jordan K. Weisman, L. Ross Babcock III

FASA **BattleTech** Line Developer: Bryan Nystul

Editor: Brian Campbell, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

Flavor Text: Wolfgang Baur, Randall Bliss, Shawn F. Carnes, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, KJ Johnson, Greg Moeller, Paul Peterson, Mike Selinker, Sharon Turner Mulvill, Teecwynn Woodruff, Warren Wyman

Brand Manager: Ron Richardson

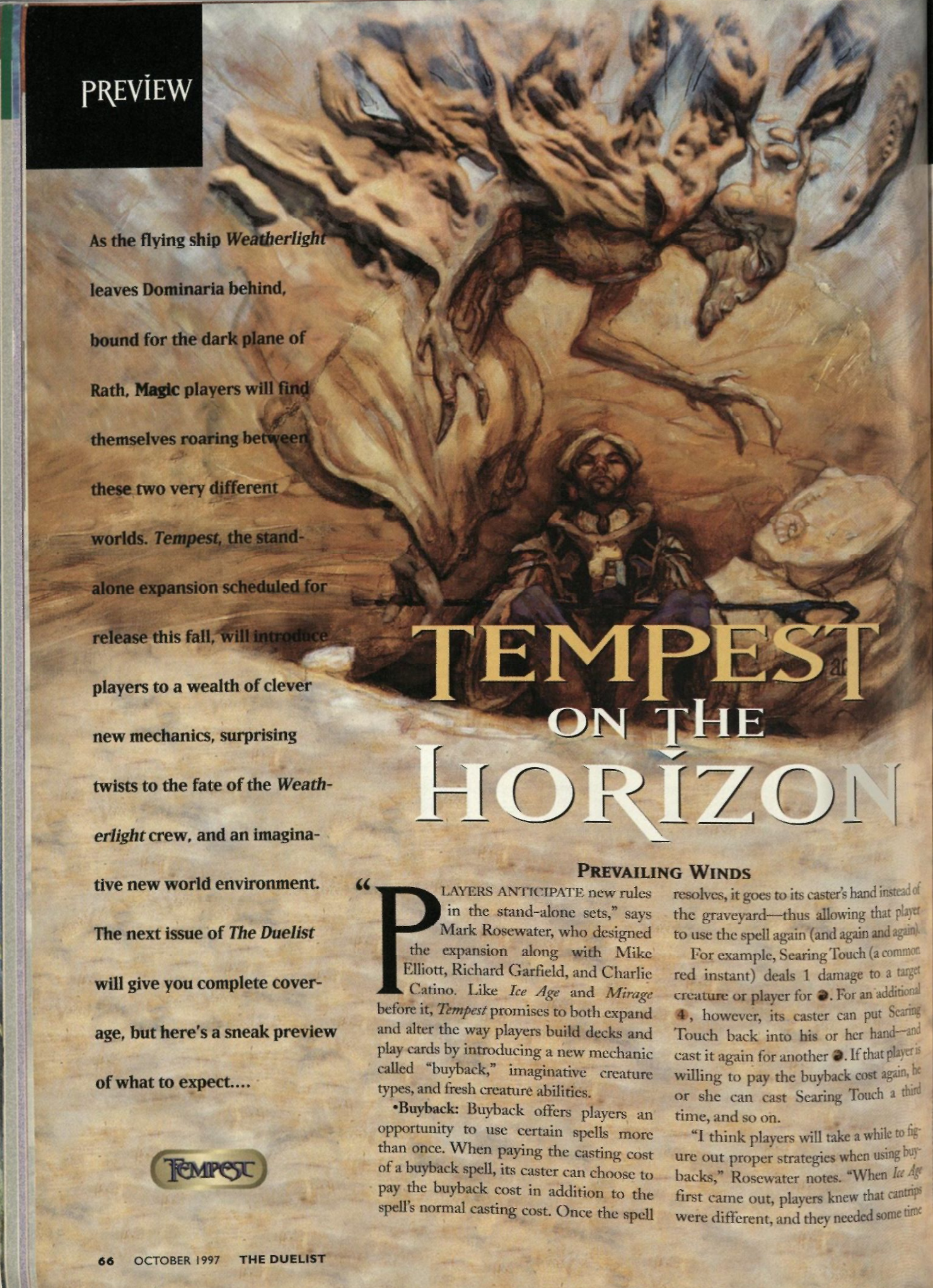
Asst. Brand Manager/Project Coordinator: Michael Brooks

General Manager: Rich Fukutaki

Art Director/Graphic Design: Roger Dale Coad

Assistant Art Director/Additional Design: Ellen Buck

As the flying ship *Weatherlight* leaves Dominaria behind, bound for the dark plane of Rath, Magic players will find themselves roaring between these two very different worlds. *Tempest*, the stand-alone expansion scheduled for release this fall, will introduce players to a wealth of clever new mechanics, surprising twists to the fate of the *Weatherlight* crew, and an imaginative new world environment. The next issue of *The Duelist* will give you complete coverage, but here's a sneak preview of what to expect....

TEMPEST ON THE HORIZON

PREVAILING WINDS

PLAYERS ANTICIPATE new rules in the stand-alone sets," says Mark Rosewater, who designed the expansion along with Mike Elliott, Richard Garfield, and Charlie Catino. Like *Ice Age* and *Mirage* before it, *Tempest* promises to both expand and alter the way players build decks and play cards by introducing a new mechanic called "buyback," imaginative creature types, and fresh creature abilities.

•**Buyback:** Buyback offers players an opportunity to use certain spells more than once. When paying the casting cost of a buyback spell, its caster can choose to pay the buyback cost in addition to the spell's normal casting cost. Once the spell

resolves, it goes to its caster's hand instead of the graveyard—thus allowing that player to use the spell again (and again and again).

For example, *Searing Touch* (a common red instant) deals 1 damage to a target creature or player for 2. For an additional 4, however, its caster can put *Searing Touch* back into his or her hand—and cast it again for another 2. If that player is willing to pay the buyback cost again, he or she can cast *Searing Touch* a third time, and so on.

"I think players will take a while to figure out proper strategies when using buybacks," Rosewater notes. "When *Ice Age* first came out, players knew that cantrips were different, and they needed some time

FROM THE GREAT FOREST OF SKYSHROUD TO THE DEATH PITS OF RATH, PLAYERS WILL DISCOVER A WORLD FILLED WITH INVENTIVE LOCALES.



to grasp exactly what the new mechanic meant in strategic terms. Buybacks will require similar study."

Players will have their hands full studying all the possibilities *Tempest* offers because buyback is only one of four variations to traditional play. Slivers, Licids, and creatures with shadow round out the set's new options.

• **Shadow:** Some creatures have this unique evasion ability that is similar to flying or landwalk. A creature with shadow can only block another creature with shadow and can only be blocked by another creature with shadow. If your opponent attacks with a Soltari Foot Soldier (a 1/1 creature with shadow for *), you can only block it with creatures that also have shadow. If none of your potential blockers have shadow, the Soltari Foot Soldier is unblockable. "Creatures with shadow," Rosewater says confidently, "are going to make *Tempest* sealed play a very aggressive environment."

• **Slivers:** Think Plague Rats with a twist. Slivers share their abilities with one another, each making the others more powerful. Your Talon Sliver (a 1/1 creature for *) only has first strike until your opponent plays a Winged Sliver (a 1/1 creature for *). The Winged Sliver gives all other Slivers flying, and the Talon Sliver gives all other Slivers first strike—so now both Slivers have flying and first strike. Add Muscle Sliver, a green creature that gives all Slivers +1/+1, and every Sliver in play gets yet another benefit!

• **Licids:** "The Licids," says Rosewater, "were made with the advanced player in mind because of their versatility and because there are so few cards in *Magic* that require different spells to destroy them at different times." That said, the simplest explanation of Licids is to describe them as creatures that can become creature enchantments and then, if needed, become creatures again. Consider Nurturing Licid, a 1/1 green creature: tapped and for a cost of ♣ it can become a Regeneration enchantment on a target creature. At any time, the Nurturing Licid's controller can pay ♣ to end the

effect, making the Licid a 1/1 creature again. "Licids will make players stop and think," Rosewater predicts.

WHEN THE SHIP COMES IN

The *Weatherlight* set introduced Gerrard, Tahngarth, Hanna, Mirri, and the rest of the crew as they set out from Dominaria for the dark plane of Rath. There, the evincar Volrath holds Captain Sisay prisoner to lure Gerrard into battle. As the story continues in *Tempest*, the *Weatherlight* makes its way across Rath's twisted skies en route to Volrath's stronghold. Almost immediately the evincar's own airship, the *Predator*, attacks. The pitched battle that follows sets the wheels in motion that will ultimately bring Gerrard to the citadel where his worst enemy waits.

If the *Weatherlight* expansion is the prologue to the *Weatherlight* saga, *Tempest* (Part I of The Rath Cycle) serves as its explosive first chapter. In addition to his work on the design team, Rosewater also serves as co-author of the saga. "We have an intense air battle, a new race of goblins, a near-fatal fall, a kidnapping, a shipwreck, angry merfolk, paranoid elves, a prophecy, and a giant portal," he says. "Michael [Ryan] and I wrote this story very cinematically. There are numerous scenes that you can just imagine watching on a giant screen at the multiplex."

In addition to the new game mechanics, the *Tempest* story explores some of the geography of Rath as the *Weatherlight* approaches Volrath's stronghold. From the great forest of Skyshroud to the Death Pits of Rath, players will discover a world filled with inventive locales.

Tempest will also give players a first look at the villain of the saga: Volrath, evincar of the Lord of the Wastes. And by the end of the *Tempest* story, Volrath will add two more members of the *Weatherlight* crew to his list of prisoners.

TAKING THE ART BY STORM

With *Tempest*, art takes on a whole new meaning, for images are more closely related to the story than they have ever been in past expansions. Senior art direc-

tor Matt Wilson says: "It describes the storyline from a sort of tourist's snapshot point of view. Many of the cards work in a series, much like the panels of a comic book, to show the sequence of events in a particular scene."

As a whole, Wilson suggests, the art works as a tour guide to the plane of Rath, introducing players to the merfolk realm of Rootwater and the subterranean mountain stronghold of Volrath. Familiar races, such as merfolk, elves, and goblins, with new twists, also add an exciting element to the world of Rath. Furthermore, players will see more detail of the *Weatherlight* itself, as well as a first look at Volrath's own flying ship, the *Predator*, commanded by malformed Greven *il-Vec*.

Such attention to detail requires a great deal of work from the artistic team. Artists Anson Maddocks, Mark Tedin, and Anthony Waters worked together on early conceptual illustrations. "Literally, they designed blueprints for each of the major characters," Wilson says, "as well as detailed visual information about the environment and the inhabitants of Rath." Some of these illustrations added new elements to the story itself. The Death Pits of Rath, for example, became the climax of the journey after the design team presented its vision of the sludge pits beneath Volrath's stronghold.

These illustrations were then brought together in a style guide that was provided to *Tempest* artists in order to maintain a consistent look and feel to the world.

"It was great to see the art come in," Wilson says, "because even though each artist brought his or her own unique style to the characters, they were always recognizable."

ALL OF THIS is just the beginning of the storm—*Tempest* is filled with surprises, from the storybook players will find in their starter decks to the introduction of the elven legend, Eladamri, Lord of Leaves. And those clouds are gathering on the horizon.... ♣

by MICHAEL G. RYAN

VANGUARD

Imagine a game in which you start with 27 life and all your creatures are unaffected by summoning sickness. Or starting with a hand size of ten cards while your opponents must play with their hands face up. If this doesn't sound like the **Magic: The Gathering** you're familiar with, you're right.

Welcome to *Vanguard*, and leave your old ideas about **Magic** at the door!

by ANDY COLLINS

Set Design: Mike Elliott, William Jodusch, Joel Mick, Mark Rosewater.
Original Concept: Allen Varney.
Flavor Text: Michael G. Ryan, Mark Rosewater, Warren Wyman.
Productions: Dan Gelon, Jesper Myrfors, Hans Reilensrath, Paul Allen Tien, Matt Wilson, Michael G. Ryan, Pete Venters, Darla Willis.

the Bigger the Better

V*anguard* is the new supplement for **Magic** that debuted in *Arena's Summer Season* (July 18–August 24). The result of a cooperative effort between Wizards of the Coast's R&D and Events departments, *Vanguard* was designed specifically for social **Magic** play. You remember, the way **Magic** was played before anyone thought of organizing a tournament—at your friend's house, in a coffee shop, or at your local **Magic** retailer.

Each of the eight *Vanguard* cards used in *Arena's Summer Season* pictures a character from the *Weatherlight* saga. Gerrard and Sisay are featured, along with Tahngarth, Karn, and others. Even Squee, the goblin cabin hand, makes an appearance. Future *Vanguard* card sets will use additional characters from this storyline.

Vanguard was never intended for use in sanctioned tournament play, and so does not have to conform to the DCI's strict guidelines. Instead, R&D was free to create powers which would be "broken" in normal game play. While an untargetable Mana Flare that only affects your own lands might be too unbalanced for a typical **Magic** expansion, just call it "Sisay" and it fits right in with *Vanguard*.

While it's true that *Vanguard* can put a spin on your old deck, the cards lend themselves to new deck ideas as well. While certain strategies that rely on multiple-card combinations may have been unreliable before, just one untargetable *Vanguard* card makes two-card combos a snap and even encourages three- and four-card combos.

For an extra-weird twist, try having two (or more) *Vanguard* cards in play for each player. Expensive multi-color spells become much more attractive with Mirri and Sisay in play, as your mana production becomes both fast and versatile. Teaming Karn with Ertai gives you artifact creatures that can't be disenchanting or blasted by your opponents' spells or effects (and 11 additional life). Just be careful not to group too many cards with negative hand-size modifiers, or you'll start play with no cards.

Or, instead of starting with a *Vanguard* card in play for each player, randomly choose a card at the start of the game and



have it function for both players (similar to an Enchant World).

After a preset number of turns, replace the card with another randomly drawn Vanguard card. Repeat throughout the duel, applying each new card's effects immediately when drawn. Note: If you use the cards in this manner, the "Starting Life" number should be applied to each player's current life total, which could reduce a player to 0 life!

The Anatomy of Vanguard

Each card has three parts that describe its powers: starting and maximum hand size; starting life; and its ability, as described in the card text.

- **Starting and maximum hand size** modifies the size of your hand, both at the start of the game and during play. For instance, if you are using Gerrard, you start the game with only three cards (seven minus four), and discard down to three cards at the end of each turn. If you're using Squee your maximum hand size, including your starting hand, is ten cards (seven plus three).

When your starting hand is small, you risk the dreaded "no-land mulligan." Even if you are lucky enough to draw a land or other mana source, your other cards had better be usable with little mana. Notice that Sisay and Gerrard (the two worst "hand-size" cards) increase your ability to either draw cards (Gerrard) or generate mana (Sisay), which can work to counteract this disadvantage in opening turns.

Conversely, with a larger hand size your options change dramatically. Multiple-card combinations become easier to get in your opening hand. Also, "card-drawing" cards become more attractive, as the discard phase is less of a threat. Imagine a Prosperous-Bloom deck with a ten-card hand-size limit!

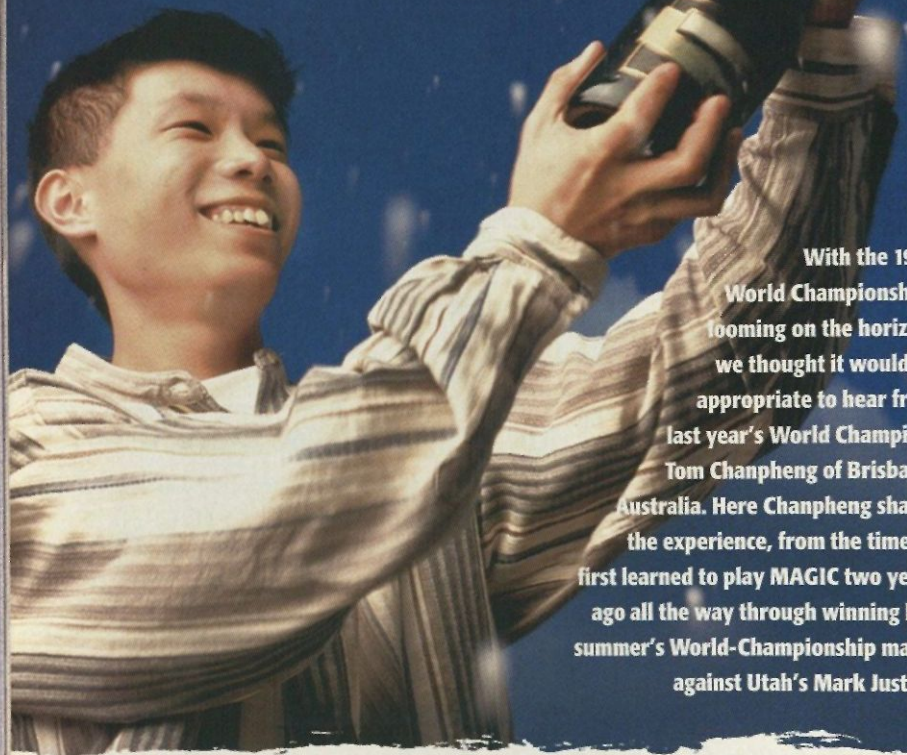
- **Starting life** is relatively self-explanatory: your starting life total is modified as shown. If you use Tahngarth, you start with 27 life (20+7); with Squee, you start with only 16 life (20-4). A higher life total gives you extra breathing room in which plots can develop, and also gives you a greater ability to take advantage of cards that require a loss of life (such as Glacial Chasm or Withering Boon). Having less life just means you'd better get going a little faster, or be able to increase your life total quickly.

- Each card's specific ability is described in the main text of the card. While most of these abilities are relatively self-explanatory, each one lends itself to a number of deck-building strategies. Tired of watching your big creatures fall to your opponent's Fireball, Pacifism, or Dark Banishing? Try Ertai on for size. Always wanted to build that "all-artifact" deck? Drop Karn on the table, and watch your opponent flee from marauding Amber Prisons and Jester's Caps. Want to know when to play your counter-spells? Squee lets you see what's in your opponent's hand at all times. Five-color decks are simple with Mirri in play, and expensive spells seem a lot cheaper with Sisay helping out. Gerrard gives you serious card advantage, though it takes a few turns to kick in. Finally, Maraxus and Tahngarth can each add some punch to a heavy creature deck.

Vanguard can be obtained from your local Arena retailer during the league's Summer Season. Vanguard is tentatively scheduled to reappear in Arena with eight new cards during early 1998. Wizards will also be offering Vanguard league play at GEN CON '97 in Milwaukee from August 7-10. Whether you add Vanguard to your favorite old decks or use it to put a brand new hurt on your opponent, it's bound to change the way you play Magic. *

The Right Stuff

by Tom Chanpheng



With the 1997 World Championships looming on the horizon, we thought it would be appropriate to hear from last year's World Champion, Tom Chanpheng of Brisbane, Australia. Here Chanpheng shares the experience, from the time he first learned to play MAGIC two years ago all the way through winning last summer's World-Championship match against Utah's Mark Justice.

Newbie Beginnings

It was back in March of '95 when my friends and I bought a starter and two boosters of *Revised* and started learning to play Magic: The Gathering. We were so absorbed by the complete playability that we played for eighteen hours straight. After that, it didn't take long to enter the tournament scene.

In my first tournament, I played a deck with Fastbonds, Psychic Venoms, Channels, and Fireballs. Not surprisingly, I didn't do well, but it was my first taste of competition. My second tournament was the Regional to qualify for the Australian Nationals, and I entered sporting a mono-black deck. Most of my wins came from Cursed Land, which annoyed a lot of people, but I also remember winning once with a 12/13 Frozen Shade.

This is where I met an excellent Magic player, Early Nguyen. Nguyen came in third, and somehow I won the tournament, so both of us qualified for the '95 Nationals in July. We set off with no playtesting and without the slightest clue as to how we would fare against the best in the country. We ended up getting creamed by players who had much better constructed decks, but oh well—there was always next year.

Training Begins

After the Nationals, I searched the Internet for Magic topics and was stunned by the plethora of info available, from decklists to strategy tips. But what really caught my atten-

Road to the Top

The road to the 1997 Magic World Championships takes many turns: some go through Regional and National competitions, others intersect with the Magic Pro Tour and DCI rankings (Limited and Constructed). Still other avenues pass through Pro Tour Qualifiers and Grand Prix events. Whichever way you wind up qualifying, you're considered among the best of the best if you reach Seattle in August.

1996-97 Pro Tour Events

The Magic: The Gathering Pro Tour schedule included four U.S. venues and one international stop during the 1996-97 season. The Top 2 finishers from each Master-division competition earned invitations to this year's Worlds as follows:

Pro Tour-Atlanta, Sept. 13-15

Frank Adler (Germany), champion; Darwin Kastle (Massachusetts), finalist

Pro Tour-Dallas, Nov. 22-24

Paul McCabe (Canada), champion; Jason Zila (California), finalist

Pro Tour-Los Angeles, Feb. 28-Mar. 2

Tommi Hovi (Finland), champion; David Mills

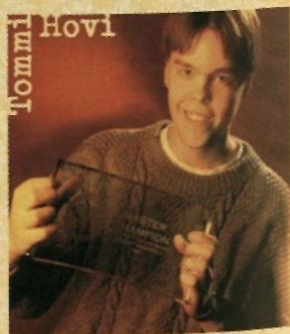
(Virginia), finalist
Pro Tour-Paris, April 11-13
Mike Long (Virginia), champion; Mark Justice (Utah), finalist
Pro Tour-New York, May 30-June 1
Terry Borer (Canada), champion; Ivan Stanoev (The Czech Republic), finalist

In addition, the 1996 Pro Tour "Player of the Year," Sweden's Olle Råde, earned an automatic invitation to this season's World Championships. To round out the list of Pro Tour candidates, the Top 10 players (based on their overall Pro Tour points compiled throughout the season) who have not yet qualified

by any other means earn invitations as well.

1997 Qualifiers and Grand Prix Tournaments

Qualifier tournaments and Grand Prix events take place in dozens of locations worldwide.



tion were the newsgroups where the very latest developments on the Magic scene were discussed in detail.

With all this new information at our disposal, Nguyen and I started constructing decks and making changes to our liking. We constructed five decks each, and every weekend we pitted them against each other. This ensured that those performing the best did so against a variety of deck types.

Satisfied with our preparation, we entered the 1996 Regionals, knowing that the Top 16 qualified for the Nationals. Nguyen elected to play the Necrodeck, which performed the best in playtesting, even though it contained only one Necropotence. I thought playing Necro was a bit risky, so I opted for a conservative white/green Erhnageddon deck. I judged this would put me in the Top 16, even though it wasn't the best deck in playtesting. It was good enough, even though it only had one Armageddon. Nguyen ended up placing second and I finished fourth, so we both qualified.

Alliances had just come out and would be incorporated into the Standard (Type II) format in time for the Nationals. Unfortunately, we had only a couple of boxes between us, and we didn't have an *Alliances* card list, so we decided to playtest with just the cards we had. After rigorous testing, the Necrodeck came out on top again, but our version was a little different: it had no Nevinyrral's Disks and just one Necropotence. The deck

also had Strip Mines, Icequakes, and Lodestone Baubles. We included four copies of *Animate Dead* because we found that it was a mana-efficient and effective card when used with *Hymn to Tourach* and *Terror*.

First Trials

Finally the '96 Nationals arrived, and Nguyen and I cruised through the first four rounds undefeated. My most memorable game was against Craig Shepard, who was playing red-green land destruction with *Orggs*, *Johtull Wurms*, *Erhnam Djinn*s, and *Storm Seekers*. It was unfortunate for him that I was playing *Lodestone Baubles* in the main deck, but he won the first game after playing two *Storm Seekers* in response to my reluctant casting of *Necropotence*. Before the second game, I sideboarded in my *Disks* because he had big creatures and *Icy Manipulators*. After the game stalled for a while, I finally used the *Disk* while my hand was full of *Terrors* and *Animate Dead*s, and he cast two *Orggs* and two *Johtull Wurms*. In response I *Terrored* three times, used *Drain Life* once, and then *Animated* three of his dead creatures, winning that game and going on to win the next.

In the sixth round I came up against a deck I'd never seen before, the best anti-Necrodeck of all: the infamous *Turbo-Stasis*. I got my opponent down to 1 or 2 life before he got the lock, winning 2-1 against me. Now Nguyen and I both

needed to win our seventh round to progress to the Top 8. Unfortunately, Nguyen was matched up against my previous opponent and lost. I, however, won and eventually placed second in the tournament. I was on my way to Seattle—and the 1996 World Championships.

I didn't do too much playtesting in preparation, but focused more on the metagame. Discussion on the newsgroups was centered on the domination of *Necro* at the U.S. Nationals, and it seemed that the Worlds would certainly be a *Necro-fest*. With that in mind, and considering the emergence of good anti-Necrodecks like *Turbo-Stasis* and *George Baxter's Song* deck, I decided to play a simple deck instead. That way, I wouldn't have to make any crucial decisions, hence reducing the number of mistakes I might make.

The white weenie was a good solid performer in playtesting, capable of winning at least forty-five percent of the time against every deck. Its biggest weakness was a deck with four *Icy Manipulators* and four *Serrated Arrows*, but it did all right after sideboarding in four *Divine Offerings*. Big creatures were also a problem, so the main deck had four *Swords to Plowshares* and one *Reprisal*, plus another *Reprisal* and one *Exile* in the sideboard. The deck was very consistent, making luck a smaller factor.

The night before I left for the World Championships, Nguyen called to wish me luck. Interestingly enough, he even

immediately preceding each Pro Tour stop. The Grand Prix tournaments make up an international circuit of large-scale "Super Qualifiers" featuring cash prizes and multiple invitations to the **Magic Pro Tour**. Top finishers at Qualifier tournaments and the Top 8 finishers at each Grand Prix event are invited to compete in the next Pro Tour event. The following Grand Prix tournaments fed into Pro Tour events affecting this year's World Championships:

Amsterdam, Netherlands

March 22-23, 1997
Prize purse: \$10,000

Washington, D.C.

April 26-27, 1997
Prize purse: \$10,000

Barcelona, Spain

May 3-4, 1997
Prize purse: \$10,000

Tokyo, Japan

May 3-4, 1997
Prize purse: \$10,000

The \$10,000 purse for each Grand Prix event is distributed as follows among the Top 32 finishers: champion, \$1,700; finalist, \$1,200; semifinalists, \$600; quarterfinalists, \$375 each; 9th-16th, \$250; and 17th-32nd, \$150.

DCI Invitees

Top-ranked members of the DCI are invited to compete in many events throughout the tournament season. Invitations are based on whatever tournament



format is being conducted (such as Classic, Standard, and Sealed Deck). For example, the Top 25 Sealed-Deck players would be invited to a Limited format competition. The Top 10 DCI-ranked

players, who haven't already qualified for the World Championships via another avenue, are also invited to compete.

1997 Regional Championships (May 24-25)

Magic Regional Championships took place in the U.S. and in select countries around the world. The U.S. Regional Championships were held May 24-25 in the following cities: Anchorage, AK; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Honolulu, HI; Kansas City, KS; Los Angeles, CA; Minneapolis, MN; Mountain Valley, CA; New York, NY; Orlando, FL; Phoenix, AZ;

joked that I would meet Mark Justice in the finals and beat him. Who'd have thought it would actually happen?

Taking Over the Worlds

Formats for the World Championships included Standard, Classic-Restricted (Type 1.5), and Limited (Booster Draft). There would be six rounds for each event, and to qualify for the Top 8, you had to win at least fourteen out of the eighteen matches.

I arrived with a good Standard deck, no Classic-Restricted deck, and only minimal drafting experience. The only thing I remember drafting in the Limited event was a Fireball, but I posted a record of 4-2 for the day, which I was very happy about. I decided to play my Standard deck in the Classic-Restricted event, with a few minor alterations on the advice of the other team members.

By the fifth round of the Standard event, I was 4-1, having lost to a red land-destruction deck, and was matched up against Sweden's Leon Lindbäck in the sixth round. He was playing a red-black deck with Hypnotic Specters, twelve Knights, and lots of direct damage. It was a bad matchup for me because he could kill my Knights, but I couldn't touch his. All our games went by very quickly, and he won the first one easily. The second duel was very close: I won with 2 life left. In the third game he had a Dystopia eating

my Knights and I had to draw a Disenchant to win, which luckily I did.

Restricted Opportunities

I needed to post a 5-1 record in the Classic-Restricted event to make the Top 8, but I didn't think I could do it; there were just too many cards in that environment that hurt a white-weenie deck. Because land destruction was prevalent, I added Lodestone Baubles, Preachers, and an Army of Allah.

In my first match I lost to an opponent who must have really despised white weenie, because his deck and sideboard had four Grooms, four Dystopias, and four Serrated Arrows. It was just too much for my deck, which cried for mercy. I couldn't afford to lose another. Fortunately, I won my second match after stealing an Erhnam with my Preacher, and took the third and fourth matches with Serra Angels.

In the fifth round I played California's Mark Chalice in three drawn-out games, the closest match of the tournament for me. In the first game he played Stormbind early and pretty much sat back behind his hand of seven cards. He just used all my creatures as target practice, occasionally burning me when there were no creatures and his hand was full. The only things he counterspelled were my Disenchants, and eventually he wore me down. I sideboarded in Arenson's

Auras for the second game. Again he cast a third-turn Stormbind and used Force of Will when I attempted to Disenchant it. This time I just tried to fill my hand with creatures. Since I wasn't doing anything, Chalice played two Mana Crypts and a Jayemdae Tome. Seeing my chance, I cast as many creatures as I could, and won before he could get rid of them all. In the latter stages of the third game, I got rid of the Stormbind and then cast a Serra Angel. But Chalice used Control Magic on the Serra and started pounding me with it. On the last possible turn, I drew a Disenchant to win. I went on to win the sixth match, at one point saving myself by using an Army of Allah on my opponent's Kird Ape and then removing it with Reprisal.

The Final Journey

I couldn't believe I'd made it into the Top 8. My first match was against Kansas City's Matthew Place, who I consider to be one of the best Magic players around. I got him down to 1 life in the opener, but he asserted control, and three Armageddons later, he'd won. The only effective creatures he had against my deck were Erhnam Djinns, but I sideboarded in the extra Reprisal and Exile, as well as four Divine Offerings, for the second game. Every time he played Icys, Arrows, or Erhnams, I was ready, and I went on to win the second and third games.

Road to the Top *continued*



Pittsburgh, PA; and Seattle, WA. The Top 8 finishers in each region were then invited to compete in the U.S. Nationals. Other countries that hosted Regional competitions this year included Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and New Zealand.

1997 Worldwide National Championships (April-July)

The 1997 **Magic: The Gathering** National Championships took place in thirty-seven countries from April through July. The Top 4 finishers from each Nationals tournament are invited to Worlds. The U.S. Nationals, the last of the competitions conducted, were held July 17-20 at Origins '97 International Game Expo & Fair in Columbus, Ohio. (Results were not available at press time, but will be featured in the *Duelist Sideboard* #8.)

Other countries that hosted individual **Magic** National Championships this year included (in alphabetical order):

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, The Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore,

Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.

1997 World Championships (August 12-17, Seattle, WA)

The 1997 **Magic: The Gathering** World Championships (individual and team tournaments) will once again mark the high point



I had the upper hand against Henry Stern of Los Angeles in the semifinals, because he only had four Knights in his Necrodeck. The first and second games went my way when he had mana problems, but the third game was much closer. Stern had a Dystopia that was eating away my offense, but I managed to squeeze enough creatures into play to prevail. He couldn't pay the upkeep for Dystopia forever and eventually lost.

I would play Mark Justice in the finals. That part of Nguyen's prediction had come true, but was he right about me winning?

Justice had only five Knights in his Necrodeck, and he was swamped by too many of my Knights in the first game. It was the second game that was most exciting. I had serious mana problems after losing two plains to Strip Mines. Justice had two Black Knights out, while I stood at 1 life with a Mishra's Factory and a Zuran Orb in play and a Balance in my hand. I played a Strip Mine, and Justice attacked with his two Knights. I animated the Factory with the Strip Mine, sacrificed the Strip Mine to the Zuran Orb for 2 life, blocked a Black Knight, and tapped the Factory to give it +1/+1 and to keep myself alive. On my next turn I drew another Strip Mine and the same thing happened again. Then I drew the plains I had been waiting for and cast Balance. In response, Justice cast Demonic Consultation twice for two

Dark Rituals. Unfortunately for him, that left him with only four cards in his library, and he couldn't pull off a win. The third game ended quickly, with Justice mana-hosed.



REX RYSTEDT

Glory Days

So there I was—the World Champion of Magic: The Gathering. I felt sort of removed, like I had no worries at all, having already experienced the initial euphoria when I made it to the Top 8. My teammates were happy that I had won, but I think they were even happier that I bought dinner for the next couple of nights as a celebration. Back in Australia, my local Magic community greeted me with cheers. I think this was mostly because they were proud that it was an Australian who had won the World Championship.

Since then I've only played in about eight tournaments, winning three and placing in some others, including 50th and 36th at two Pro Tour events (Atlanta and Dallas, respectively). Unfortunately, I've missed three Pro Tours and haven't competed in a tournament since going to Hong Kong to play in the *Duelist Invitational*—mainly because of school commitments—but I playtest with Nguyen on a regular basis.

People always ask me if other Magic players treat me differently now. Actually, after the dust settled, they treated me the way they treated me before the Worlds—because even though the experience was wonderful, it didn't change who I was.

This year's Worlds, which is being held at Wizards of the Coast's new Game Center, should prove to be exciting too. The card mix ensures a great diversity of strong deck types without one that dominates. There will be a heavy emphasis on creature decks, with no broken cards in the mix (good job, DCI!). I'm expecting the competition to be much better this year, with more Pro Tour champs and more countries competing. I have the feeling that getting into the Top 16 is going to be like trying to buy a Black Lotus for a hundred dollars. My goal is to do both. ☺

Twenty-year-old Tom Chanpbeng is about as modest as they come. You can read more about him in "About Our Contributors" on page 8.

of another successful and competitive tournament season for Magic players around the globe. This year's competitions will be held August 12–17 at the newly christened Wizards of the Coast Game Center in Seattle's University District. The overall prize purse is \$250,000. (The Top 4 place-finishers from last year's individual World Championships also earned automatic invites to this year's Worlds.)

This year's individual championships will test each player's mettle with a variety of formats, including: Limited (Rochester Draft: *Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight*), August 13; Standard (Type II) Constructed, August 14; and Extended Constructed (new DCI format), August 15.

The payout breakdown is as follows: \$34,000, champion; \$22,000, finalist; \$12,000, semifinalists; \$8,000, quarterfinalists; \$4,200, 9th–16th; \$2,400, 17th–32nd; and \$500, 33rd–64th. Following the first three days of intense competition, the individual finals will be held Sunday, August 17, starting at 9 A.M., in Standard format.

The team competition will be held on Saturday, August 16, starting at 9 A.M. The Top 4 finishers from each country's National Championships (competing as a team), will play in a Limited environment (*Fifth Edition-Weatherlight*) and compete for cash prizes totaling \$50,000. The payout is as follows: \$22,000, championship



REX RYSTEDT

team; \$12,000, finalist team; \$8,000, semifinalist teams.

There will also be a variety of side events taking place during "World Championships Week" at the Wizards Game Center. Starting on Monday, August 11, and

running through Sunday, August 17, Magic tournaments of every conceivable combination and format will be held for anyone who'd like to partake. Come one, come all, just come to play Magic. —compiled by Terry Media

BALLOT

PLAYERS WITH AT LEAST 4 POINTS IN THE '96-'97 SEASON

NAME	TOTAL
<input type="checkbox"/> DARWIN KASTLE, USA	45
<input type="checkbox"/> JOHN YOO, USA	45
<input type="checkbox"/> MICHAEL LONG, USA	44
<input type="checkbox"/> TERRY BORER, CANADA	43
<input type="checkbox"/> JASON ZILA, USA	39
<input type="checkbox"/> TOMMI HOVI, FINLAND	36
<input type="checkbox"/> MARK JUSTICE, USA	36
<input type="checkbox"/> PAUL MCCABE, CANADA	32
<input type="checkbox"/> FRANK ADLER, GERMANY	30
<input type="checkbox"/> CHRIS PIKULA, USA	30
<input type="checkbox"/> BRIAN HACKER, USA	26
<input type="checkbox"/> DAVID MILLS, USA	26
<input type="checkbox"/> ALAN COMER, USA	25
<input type="checkbox"/> IVAN STANOEV, THE CZECH REPUBLIC	25
<input type="checkbox"/> AARON MURANAKA, USA	20
<input type="checkbox"/> HENNING RIMKUS, GERMANY	20
<input type="checkbox"/> GABRIEL TSANG, CANADA	20
<input type="checkbox"/> JEROEN WEYDEN, THE NETHERLANDS	20
<input type="checkbox"/> MARK CHALICE, USA	17
<input type="checkbox"/> BRIAN WEISSMAN, USA	17
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUC BUI, USA	14
<input type="checkbox"/> JOHN CHINNOCK, USA	14
<input type="checkbox"/> JOHN IMMORDINO, USA	14
<input type="checkbox"/> GEORGE BAXTER, USA	13
<input type="checkbox"/> PAUL FERKER, USA	13
<input type="checkbox"/> MATTHEW VIENNEAU, CANADA	13
<input type="checkbox"/> OLLE RÅDE, SWEDEN	12
<input type="checkbox"/> MICHAEL PUSTILNIK, USA	11
<input type="checkbox"/> STURLA BINGEN, NORWAY	10
<input type="checkbox"/> JASON GORDON, USA	10
<input type="checkbox"/> ROBERT THORNBURG, USA	10
<input type="checkbox"/> PEER KRÖGER, GERMANY	10
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THE DUELIST 1998 Invitational

GOING TO RIO

1998 Duelist Invitational Balloting Kicks Off!

The time has come for *Duelist* and *Duelist Sideboard* readers to nominate candidates for the 1998 *Duelist* Invitational. This is the tournament in which sixteen of the best Magic players in the world gather to battle in various play formats: the ultimate test of strategy and skill. The second annual *Duelist* Invitational will take place in Rio de Janeiro January 29 through February 1, 1998.

Players listed on the ballot have each earned at least four Pro Tour player points during the 1996-97 Pro Tour season (point totals reflect results through June's Pro Tour-New York).

The sixteen participants at last year's *Duelist* Invitational (won by Sweden's Olle Råde) were selected by their peers at the 1996 Magic World Championships, and by a panel of qualified judges. This time around, selections will be made according to these ballots, as well as nominations made by the competitors at this year's Magic World Championships in Seattle in August.

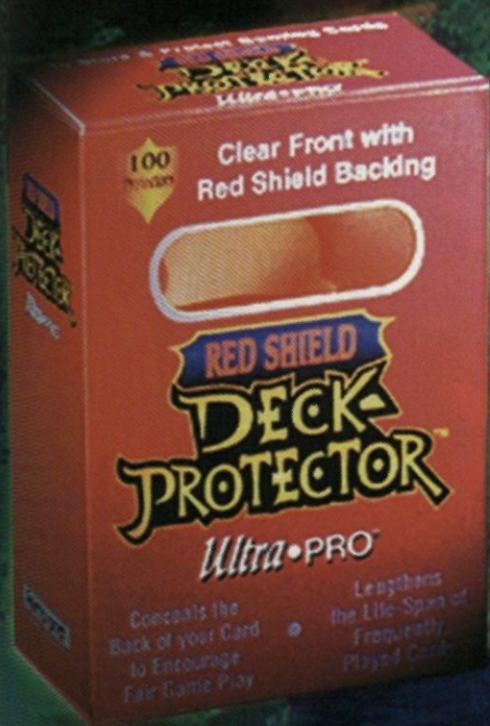
One lucky respondent and a guest will be flown to Rio to witness the blow-by-blow action at this exciting event. Watch for upcoming contest information to enter.

Indicate (with a check mark) your sixteen selections, then mail your ballot to: *Duelist* Invitational Picks, c/o *The Duelist*, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057. Photocopies of this page are acceptable. Selections may also be sent electronically to: <duelist@wizards.com>. The deadline for all ballots is August 30, 1997. Limit one entry per person.

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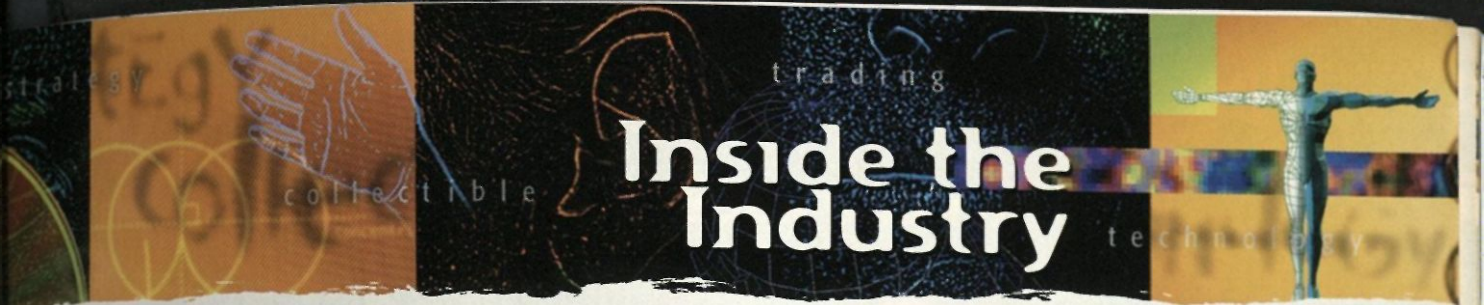
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Inside the Industry

The Studio System Part 2

GAME NEWS & UPDATES

reports on trading card games

Last issue's column looked at the recent proliferation of design studios: small companies, often former publishers themselves, that contract to design card games for larger publishers. Studios have multiplied in many creative fields, including comics and computer games. In adventure gaming, two main factors have driven the trend: distribution and rising production costs.

In the wake of 1995's financial euphoria and 1996's inevitable economic collapse, distributors have pruned their operations to concentrate on proven sellers. This reluctance to order new items has formed a united front against small publishers, and overcoming such short-sighted strategy requires a major license or marketing push. Which brings us to costs. To produce a competitive trading card game in today's market requires \$100,000—and up!

"It's expensive to do it yourself," said Fleer/SkyBox's Steve Domzalski. The Fleer/Skybox card game department (which includes only Domzalski and Ron Perazza) can't wholly devote itself to design "because there's all this other stuff on your mind"—marketing, retail and customer support, tournaments, and so on. "It's better to create an editorial spec and give the assignment to someone who can focus one hundred percent on the game," Domzalski said.

But the publisher-studio relationship has its own problems. Dave Hewitt of Precedence says: "The biggest problem is figuring out exactly who is doing what, where each responsibility lies." For instance, HarperPrism is marketing the *Aliens/Predator* game, but Precedence needs Harper's promotional artwork to do magazine pub-

licity. Hewitt said the design progressed "very smoothly" after Precedence consolidated everyone's ideas about the game, but that "there's a lot more work involved than most people realize."

Imagine a trading card game about the process of creating a hit trading card game. The studio system would be its latest expansion: change the basic rules a bit, add some new issues, and once again, raise the stakes of victory.

Some of the studios involved in this trend include NXXI Games (which designed *X-Files* for USPC), Alderac (*Legend of the Five Rings* and *Doomtown*, the *Deadlands* card game, for Five Rings Publishing), Last Unicorn Games (*Dune* for Five Rings), Mag Force 7 (*Star Trek: The Card Game* for Fleer/SkyBox), and most recently Precedence (*Aliens/Predator* for HarperPrism) and Mayfair Games (now a board game studio owned by Iron Crown Enterprises).

A *Aliens/Predator* (HarperPrism, New York City): Due in August, the basic game with 350-plus cards (three rarities) is sold in three "stacked" starters (fifty fixed cards, ten random uncommons and rares, \$8.95) keyed to Alien, Predator, and Marine players, and in fifteen-card boosters (\$2.95). Most of the popular characters from the *Alien* movies, including Ripley, appear on the photo-illustrated cards. The design, by John Myler, Dave Hewitt, Ron Ackels, and Paul Brown, is scenario-based to allow "what if?" games using characters from different times. Early next year Precedence hopes to release an expansion based on the forthcoming *Alien Resurrection* movie. <www.harperprism.com/ccg>

D *Dune* (Last Unicorn Games, Harrisburg, PA/Five Rings Publishing Group, Bellevue, WA): The 300-card basic game, *Eye of the Storm*, will ship in July in the format made familiar by *Legend of the Five Rings*: six stacked starters (\$8.99, half fixed, half random) keyed to *Dune*'s six political factions, and fifteen-card boosters (\$2.99). The first expansion, concerning the Fremens, will ship in October. <monomyth@aol.com>; <l5r@frpg.com>

G *Galactic Empires* (Companion Games, Stamford, NY): In May, Companion Games entered Chapter 7 bankruptcy. "Regrettably, we cannot produce any further products, make payments or refunds of any kind without court approval," says Companion Games spokesman Carl Schulte. At press time Schulte hoped another company, Component Game Systems, would buy Companion Games and continue support for *Galactic Empires*. <comgames@aol.com>

K *Knightmare Chess* (Steve Jackson Games, Austin, TX): SJG plans a December release for a stand-alone compatible eighty-card expansion, creatively titled *Series 2* (as distinct from the original game's June second edition). European painter Rogerio Vilela returns as artist. <sjgames@io.com>; <io.com/sjgames/>

by Allen Varney <APVarney@aol.com>

GAME NEWS & UPDATES

[continued]

⑤ **Legend of the Five Rings** (Five Rings): Due about now, the deluxe Obsidian (third) Edition features starter sets including sixty cards, a booster pack, twenty glass counters, and an expanded rulebook for \$9.99. This edition changes all flavor text and some artwork, and replaces the Imperial Edition's six Ancestral Armor cards with new Clan Banners. The concluding *Time of the Void* expansion (August) has been reduced from 300 to 160 cards, and from twelve to two starters (splinter Scorpion and Lion factions); starters are \$7.99, eleven-card boosters \$1.99. Starting in October, the prequel *Scorpion Clan Coup* will debut; 5R will release fifty to sixty cards each month for three months. <l5r@frpg.com>; <www.frpg.com>

⑤ **Middle-Earth: The Wizards** (Iron Crown Enterprises, Charlottesville, VA): The 160-plus-card expansion *Against the Shadow*, supplementing the *Lidless Eye* stand-alone set, will appear in August. Sold in twelve-card boosters (\$3.25) that include two rares, the set will introduce company vs. company combat (heroes vs. minions) and new "White hazards" (the nine Wizards and elf-lords as creature cards that present permanent hazards to Ringwraith parties). This summer a forty-eight page *Casual Companion* guide, edited by Karina Swanberg, offers fun non-tournament deck ideas. In fall *The White Hand*, an expansion with around 100 cards, will let players become neutral (corrupted) Wizards who can use both Wizard and Ringwraith resources. ICE is planning a Middle-Earth gift set with simplified rules, a map, and counters. Qualifier tournaments at Origins and Gen Con will culminate in October's North American championship and February's world championship. <ice@ironcrown.com>; <www.ironcrown.com>

⑤ **Mythos** (Chaosium, Oakland, CA): *New Aeon*, the stand-alone modern-era expansion due in August, senses the '90s zeitgeist by including conspiracy elements like Men in Black, UFOs, Grays, and Crop Circles. Gameplay involves using monsters as allies or allies as monsters. New Investigators include five monsters—the human Overworked Computer Programmer, for

instance, is backed by an Overworked Deep One. Sixty-card starters are \$8.95, thirteen-card boosters \$2.95. The strategy guide has been delayed until spring. A spring stand-alone set, *Ends of the Earth*, covers the South Pacific, Antarctica, and other remote Lovecraftian locales. <chaosium@chaosium.com>; <www.sirius.com/~chaosium/chaosium.html>

⑤ **OverPower** (Fleer/SkyBox, New York City): A *Classic OverPower* expansion, due in September, covers older Marvel characters like Dracula, Black Panther, Ka-Zar, and Baron Mordo, and variant versions of current heroes (the gray Hulk, black-suited Spider-Man, Iron Man's original armor, etc.). Sold in fifteen-card boosters (\$2.95), the set introduces "Tactics Artifacts," powerful devices that characters can give each other (Cosmic Control Rod, Adamantium Shield, Ultimate Nullifier). *Image OverPower* will ship in November. At press time Fleer/SkyBox was apparently to be spun off from its troubled parent company, Marvel Entertainment Group, but this should not affect Fleer's release schedule. <fsnetrep@aol.com>

⑤ **Star Trek: The Card Game** (Fleer/SkyBox): The *Alien Encounters* set has been postponed but may still appear this year.

⑤ **Star Trek CCG** (Decipher, Norfolk, VA): The *First Contact* expansion has been pushed back to August (nine-card boosters, \$2.50). Along with many Borg affiliation cards, the set includes Zephraim Cochran, the *Enterprise-E*, and other notables from last year's movie. The long-planned *Holodeck Adventures* set is being replaced by a fall expansion that makes combat more frequent and unpredictable. The *Trek* world championship will take place October 26-27 in the Space Quest casino of the Las Vegas Hilton. <DCust-Serve@decipher.com>; <www.decipher.com>

⑤ **Star Wars CCG** (Decipher): *Cloud City*, due in September, will cover the final third of *The Empire Strikes Back*. Players can put a price on an enemy character's head and send bounty hunters to collect it. The 180-card set (fifty common, fifty uncommon, and eighty R1 rare) sells in nine-card boosters (\$2.50). <www.decipher.com> ■

previews

Babylon 5 (Precedence, Tempe, AZ): Precedence (*Gridiron*, *Aliens/Predator*) has licensed card game rights to the Warner science fiction TV series. Precedence producer Paul Brown calls *Babylon 5* "the perfect candidate for a collectible card game—a rich universe with military, diplomatic, and social interaction, and a huge image library." The card game, which is not related to the recent Chameleon Eclectic *Babylon Project* RPG, will be closely modeled after the show. Players can pick any timeframe from the show's development for their games. Brown hopes for a November release of the initial set.

Rage (Five Rings Publishing Group): As announced last issue, White Wolf's *Werewolf*-based card game has been licensed to Five Rings. The new edition, compatible with existing cards, retains most of the existing design but changes

details like simultaneous card play. Starting in September, 5R will release sixty new *Rage* cards every month for nine months, telling an ongoing story approved by White Wolf. Set in Las Vegas and the Southwest, the story involves Wyrms activity at Hoover Dam ("center of all weirdness"), a nuclear testing site, Area 51, and even a time-travel flashback to the new *Werewolf: The Wild West* RPG.

Each month will bring two new starter decks (each keyed to a Tribe or Wyrms faction and half fixed in *Legend of the Five Rings* fashion) plus boosters (size undetermined at press time). All cards are equally common. "We're going to make the *Five Rings Rage*," said 5R's Daniel Landers, "but make it as true to the *White Wolf Rage* as possible, because we don't want to alienate the audience." The *Project Twilight* expansion that White Wolf had planned before canceling its card lines will not appear. <l5r@frpg.com>; <www.frpg.com>

For more information, contact the email address or website given with each entry.

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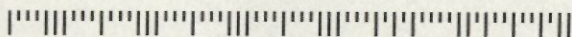
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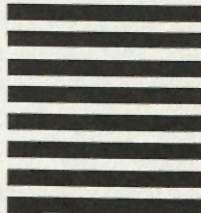
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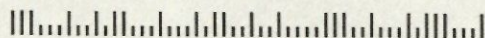
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Genetic Superiority

Chron X: The Virtual Trading Card Game

► by Wolfgang Baur

A nasty virus has rotted the minds of the Wizards R&D staff in the last few weeks. It's a new vice based on old principles: a trading card game called Chron X has arrived in Renton via the Net. Set in a familiar cyberpunk world, Chron X allows you to fight a war for global power using agents scattered around the world. Even better, it allows you to play a trading card game against opponents who may be scattered just as far away.

To start playing, just download the software from the Chron X website <www.geneticanomalies.com>. Give it some time, it's a big download. When you decompress the file, you've got the heart of the game. An FAQ list on the Genetic Anomalies Web page covers

most of the basic rules and questions. In addition, the site provides a complete card list, covering the entire base set of 200 cards.

The game's art is striking. In the electronic format, you can view card art in a close-up that takes up a third of the screen. Relatively few stinkers crept into the set, and the art by Cortney Skinner, Omar Rayyan, and George Moromisato really stands out. Even the weakest art is no worse than early Magic art. Great, you're saying, but I'm a gamer, not an art critic, and I've seen plenty of decent-looking games. The real question is "How does it play?"

To get your feet wet, enter the "Play Trainer" mode from the main screen. This pits you against the computer on one of four possible maps: the Americas, Europe, Asia, or the world. While the Trainer mode isn't a very sophisticated opponent, it's enough to get started. The AI takes its turns quickly, and the game provides good built-in help. Just click on a card to find out what it does, or leave the cursor hovering over a card to reveal a help balloon.

Your goal is to find and destroy enemy headquarters. To do so, you deploy Assets (creatures) that you put into play using Resources (mana) drawn from Bases (land). Your opponent's HQ is in one of a dozen or more cities on the map. On the America map, for example, the cities range from Los Angeles to Sao Paulo. To find the HQ, you move Assets from place to place, searching for (and attacking) Bases and other agents. But just because your opponent's Assets come looking for you doesn't mean you'll see

them coming; Assets with high "Stealth" remain hidden from sight until they attack.

Sound complicated yet? It's not, due to the familiarity of the basic rules, which are based on principles familiar to any seasoned card gamer. Attacking, blocking, enchantments, and casting cost are all treated exactly as in Magic, while Armor, mana, and damage resemble BattleTech. You'll see lots of familiar abilities as well, including first strike, regeneration, and cards that can be tapped for special effects. The basics of the game design

don't break much new ground.

But that doesn't mean that the rules are all familiar terrain. The Resources you gain from your Bases stay in a permanent mana pool. Over a few turns, that can add up quickly to allow you to play high-cost cards early in the game. Assets can move from one location to another, tapping as they do so—but moving costs Resources.

The largest difference is that you don't always see the cards your opponent has in play, as Assets have varying levels of Stealth and Perception. However, any of your Assets can be tapped to search a city. This action locates your opponent's Assets with Stealth equal to or less than the searching Asset's Perception value. In other words, finding a stealthy Asset is impossible if all you have are heavy-footed goons.

In addition, some Assets have heavy Armor which reduces an attack by half the Armor value (I don't know why they



Genetic Anomalies
Cambridge, MA

PRESIDENT
Shawn Broderick

CHIEF DESIGNER
George Moromisato

VP OF ENGINEERING
Michael Johnson

ART DIRECTOR
David Margil

CONTACT
Genetic Anomalies
47 3rd Street, STE 200
Cambridge, MA 02141
(617) 374-7500
email: <info@geneticanomalies.com>
website: <www.geneticanomalies.com>

Inside the Industry

collectible

didn't just halve the Armor value in the first place). Despite the existence of Armor, all attacks do a minimum of 1 point of damage. That damage is subtracted from an Asset's hit points and tracked by the computer. When hit points reach zero, the Asset dies and goes to the Body Bank.

While a text description such as this makes the game sound slow or clunky, the gameplay is actually remarkably smooth. In fact, the **Chron X** game interface is nothing short of amazing. The programmers have taken full advantage of the online format. The game does all the record-keeping for you. It taps cards, tracks damage, increases Armor, deducts casting costs from your resource pool, determines random effects, and all so smoothly that you don't even notice it at first. Play the trainer a few times and you'll soon smooth out the wrinkles.

While the **Chron X** trainer is good enough to show you the basics, it's not satisfying for long. Fortunately, **Chron X** has excellent online play. From the main screen, click on "Ranked Game" to play against a human opponent for points, or click on "Skill Test" to play just for fun. Skill tests are great for testing out new decks on a real player, while no record is kept of the result.

To play for keeps and improve your rank, you must be a registered player. Registration costs \$25 and includes two starter decks (120 cards). In addition, registered players can hang out in the Ranked Game chat space, buy boosters, and soon even trade cards. Already, the top ten registered players and their scores are displayed right on the main screen, so everyone knows if you have clawed your way to the top.

Once an online challenge is accepted, you play normally, though the turns go by a little slower against a human opponent. Occasionally, an error message will show up, explaining that your connection has been terminated because of instability on the Net (lost packets, etc.). Amazingly,



ingly, this doesn't necessarily mean that your game is over. The software usually sets up a new connection, and you can keep right on playing.

Chron X wouldn't be a TCG without virtual boosters, decks, and card collections. The "Manage Deck" utility lets you stay on top of a large number of cards. Just imagine being able to sort your entire collection of real-world cards by name, type, or color with a single mouse click. **Chron X** lets you do all that and more. I wish my real-world collection were that easy to handle.

In addition to sorting, **Chron X** has a great deck-creation and tracking system. Once you build a deck, you give it a name. Then you can construct another deck, using the same cards or different cards, and save it under another name. No matter how many decks a particular card is supposed to appear in, the complete deck is always there when you need to play it. Sure beats hunting for a Mind Twist or a Mox that you have shifted from deck to deck so often you've lost track of it.

The virtual cards cost about the same as a real booster or deck. Boosters are sold in various forms, from fifteen-card packs at \$3 each to booster boxes (twelve packs) at \$25. Cards come in four levels of rarity: common, uncommon, rare, and very rare. Rare and very rare cards are generally more powerful than their common counterparts. In many cases (especially among resource cards), a rare card is clearly superior to a common, so **Chron X** suffers from being a money game as much as a skill game.

Chron X's base set includes both broken cards and complete losers. As in any trading card game, finding the best cards and combinations is half the fun. The Sabotage (almost unblock-

able) and Regeneration abilities are some of the strongest. But the game's balance is sometimes thrown off by degenerate combinations like Rejuvenation Tank/Urduan Martyr. Fortunately, such combos and even specific card powers can be updated on the fly by the programmers, so the game balance will continue to improve over time.

Interestingly, buying a card doesn't guarantee that you can play with it. At the start of each online game, the program checks whether your deck is legal. Decks have a forty-card minimum, and no more than four of any single card may be included. By validating your deck, Genetic Anomalies has made it impossible to cheat on a deck list or to play banned or restricted cards. They've even made it easy to issue errata, simply by updating the software.

A few features were missing from **Chron X**, but may be implemented in the near future. The biggest omission so far is that you can't trade your virtual cards over the Net. That will change by August, when Genetic Anomalies will institute online trading areas. Online leagues as well as sealed and constructed-format tournaments are also on the drawing boards for future release.

Another feature I'd like to see is **Chron X** email and a set of message boards. At the moment, you can chat with other players, but there's no way to leave messages. Email would allow you to arrange matches and card trades with players who aren't currently logged on to the **Chron X** server. Message boards would create a place to discuss mechanics, deck construction, and so on.

The future looks bright for **Chron X**. The Genetic Anomalies team is already planning the first expansion, due out in a few months. Let's hope future online card games live up to the standard they have set. ■



Wolfgang Baur goes by the name "Mefisto" when playing **Chron X**.

Reborn on the Bayou

► by Cory Herndon

Can the Light Side Learn Enough Before the Dark Side Comes Calling?

"You will go to the Dagobah system. You will learn from Yoda—the Jedi Master who instructed me."

So said Obi-Wan, and so it shall be. Decipher's *Dagobah* expansion set introduces a whole freighter load of new game elements for the Light Side, including Asteroid Fields, Jedi Training, yet another Luke—the "Son of Skywalker," and, of course, Yoda. The Light Side has two major strategies available in this set: capitalizing on the Asteroid Fields or holing up and training on Dagobah. This deck (see sidebar) takes the latter route.

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Dagobah

Expansion set for Star Wars Customizable Card Game
Decipher Inc., Norfolk, VA

FORMAT

180-card expansion set; 9 cards per booster pack. For two or more players; playing time 30-60 minutes.

DESIGNER

Decipher Design Team

ART DIRECTION

Decipher Art Team

CONTACT

Decipher, 235 Granby Street
Norfolk, VA 23510-1813
<<http://www.decipher.com>>



The Dagobah System is a natural starting location for the Light Side. Just by having it out, you can deploy one related site per turn directly from your Reserve deck, which means you can cycle through all the 0-value Destiny cards within a few turns. You'll also have all the Force activation you need, while denying it to your opponent.

The Son of Skywalker sits pretty with power and ability of 5, although he can deploy only to Dagobah or Cloud City. You'll want to get him on the table as soon as possible, preferably with Yoda, and begin training immediately with Jedi Tests from your Reserve deck. There are five Jedi Tests in the set, but we only want the first two (the other three provide nifty bonuses, but don't actually fit in this deck). The first, Great Warrior, can be accomplished by almost any character in your deck under the right circumstances, and prevents the Dark Side's Force Drain bonuses. A Jedi's Strength forces your opponent to have at least 6 ability to draw Destiny.

Whoever it is you have on Dagobah, make sure you deploy Encampment—an Effect that allows you to deploy anyone, including a certain crazy old wizard, directly to the swamp planet. Once you

have a decent crew down there, start passing out the lightsabers, which you'll be using primarily for Draining.

After all the Draining, training, and saber-rattling, the key to this deck is simple Force retrieval. Your three main weapons on this front will be Reflection, which allows you to retrieve one Force per turn and also makes Leia a darn fine apprentice; Figrin D'an, which gives you one random Force retrieval; and On The Edge, which works best with Electrobinoculars to help you identify the highest Force to retrieve. Watch your opponents stare in horror as you retrieve card after card from your Lost pile while theirs just keep growing!

These strategies will ultimately encourage the Dark Side to attempt a landing on Dagobah—no easy task for a Star Destroyer or TIE fighter, but easily accomplished by one of the new Independent (Bounty Hunter) starships available to the Dark Side. This is where your Landing Claw comes in. A huge boon to the Light side, a Landing Claw allows a ship to attach to any Capital starship to block a Force Drain. However, neither player can initiate a battle if Yoda is present at a site unless a Dark Side character with ability higher than 3 is there as well. Use Yoda's Gimer Stick to get around that, or simply move him away. If the Hunters come bearing arms, Disarm them (another benefit to your stack of sabers) and hack them up at will.

Finally, another bonus for the good guys is Tunnel Vision and Levitation. These Interrupts allow you to search your Force and Used piles, respectively, and take one card into your hand. This is a remarkable advantage, allowing you to play with only one copy of your most vital cards. Combined with the other *Dagobah* search cards in this deck, you'll always be able to get key cards when you need them.

"I won't fail you. I'm not afraid."
"You will be. He-heh, Mmm...
you will be."

The Dark Side's best strategy, once again, is domination in space. Since you're going

to seize control as quickly as possible, you'll want the System that provides you with the greatest possible Force Drain (neither side can Drain at the Dagobah System). Your starting location, therefore, will be the Wookiee homeworld of Kashyyyk. If the Light Side manages to complete Great Warrior Jedi Test, they will cancel Kashyyyk's +1 bonus, so Drain early, and often.

No card deserves special mention more than Darth Vader's flagship, the *Executor*. With power and armor of 12, and immunity to attrition less than 12, this 8+ kilometer Super Star Destroyer is the last word in subjugation. You can deploy and carry starfighters on it, which is handy as you'll need the starfighters to make a landing on Dagobah, or to navigate the Asteroid Fields effectively.

Other than Vader, Tarkin, Piett, Needa, and Motti, you won't need any Imperials at all. Since the Independent starships currently require at least one Smuggler or Bounty Hunter to pilot, you'll be depending heavily on these new aliens (along with old Smuggler-standbys Dr. Evazan and Ponda Baba). Bossk's ship, the *Hound's Tooth*, is a Capital starship that can carry several passengers and a vehicle, but deploys and moves like a starfighter. This ship or the *Mist Hunter* will be your best bet for a Dagobah landing.

Each Bounty Hunter has special quirks, of course. Dengar, for instance, is power +1 for every Light character with him at a site. Boba Fett (currently available in the *First Anthology* as a preview card) only has ability of 2, but his armor is 5. In addition, any character hit by Fett with any weapon has a forfeit of 0, and he can fly three sites at a time—just try to catch him.

Another key to this deck is the Dagobah: Cave location. A domain of evil it is. Once it's out, play "Failure at the Cave." It suspends all Jedi Test effects, and if your opponent wants them back, an apprentice must go to the cave and draw Destiny. If the apprentice draws anything less than 4, you retrieve 2 Force—

if they draw 0, the apprentice is lost.

Other than controlling space and arming your Bounty Hunters to the teeth, a few other tactics deserve mention. Whenever possible, carry your starfighters on the *Executor*—this way, you can save a starfighter's regular move for a Dagobah landing. Make ample use of those Lightsaber Deficiencies—they can be a nasty surprise for players who have the gall to give Han a lightsaber. Image of the Dark Lord will let you cut down on the Light Side's Force activation advantage on the swamp planet, and peep away all your opponent's Senses and Alters with Voyeur.

"Ready, are you? What know you of ready?"

The *Dagobah* expansion, like *Hoth* before it, has rewritten the landscape of the Star Wars CCG. Jedi Training, Asteroids (which really deserve their own article), the *Executor*, and Bounty Hunters will prove invaluable additions to your decks, while still working effectively against *Hoth*, *New Hope*, and *Premiere* decks. Until the epic confrontation at Cloud City, may the Force be with you. ■

For Cory Herndon, there is no try. He either does, or does not. Anybody who says different can take it up with me and my wookiee.

Light Side "Kamp Kenobi"

System/Sites

- 1 Dagobah System (Starting Location)
- 1 Dagobah: Yoda's Hut
- 1 Dagobah: Bog Clearing
- 1 Dagobah: Training Area
- 1 Dagobah: Swamp
- 1 Dagobah: Jungle

Characters

- 2 Son of Skywalker
- 2 Leia Organa
- 1 Yoda
- 1 Obi-Wan Kenobi
- 1 Han Solo
- 1 Chewbacca
- 1 BoShek
- 1 Figrin D'an
- 1 R2-D2

Starships/Weapons/Devices

- 1 Millennium Falcon
- 1 Gold Leader In Gold 1
- 1 Gold 2
- 2 Jedi Lightsaber
- 1 Anakin's Lightsaber
- 1 Obi-Wan's Lightsaber
- 2 Electrobinoculars
- 1 Landing Claw
- 1 Han's Toolkit
- 1 Luke's Backpack

Jedi Tests

- 1 Great Warrior
- 1 A Jedi's Strength

Effects

- 2 Lightsaber Proficiency
- 1 Sai'torr Kal Fas

1 Encampment

- 1 Reflection
- 1 Revolution
- 1 Anger, Fear, Aggression
- 1 Yoda's Gimer Stick
- 1 Traffic Control
- 1 For Luck

Interrupts

- 2 Alter¹
- 2 Sense¹
- 2 Corellian Slip¹
- 3 Tunnel Vision²
- 2 On The Edge²
- 2 Control²
- 2 Gift Of The Mentor¹
- 2 Jedi Levitation²
- 1 Away Put Your Weapon
- 1 We Don't Need Their Scum

Dark Side "Who's the Bossk?"

Systems/Sites

- 1 Kashyyyk (Starting Location)
- 1 Kessel
- 1 Tatooine
- 1 Anoat
- 1 Dagobah: Cave
- 1 *Executor*: Meditation Chamber

Characters/Creatures

- 2 Darth Vader
- 1 Grand Moff Tarkin
- 1 Captain Needa
- 1 Captain Piett
- 1 Admiral Motti
- 1 Boba Fett
- 1 Dengar
- 1 Bossk
- 1 Zuckuss
- 1 Danz Borin

1 Dr. Evazan

- 1 Ponda Baba
- 1 WED15-17 "Septoid" Droid
- 2 Dianoga
- 1 Dragonsnake

Starships/Weapons

- 1 *Executor*
- 1 Avenger
- 1 Imperial-Class Star Destroyer
- 1 Vader's Custom TIE
- 1 Hound's Tooth
- 1 Mist Hunter
- 1 Punishing One
- 1 Vader's Lightsaber
- 1 Dark Jedi Lightsaber
- 1 Bossk's Mortar Gun
- 1 Dengar's Blaster Carbine

Effects

- 1 Image Of The Dark Lord
- 2 Disarmed
- 1 Failure At The Cave

Interrupts

- 3 Imbalance¹
- 3 Tallon Roll¹
- 3 Alter¹
- 2 Sense¹
- 2 Dark Maneuvers¹
- 2 Lightsaber Deficiency¹
- 2 Control²
- 2 I Have You Now²
- 1 The Empire's Back¹
- 1 Voyeur
- 1 Those Rebels Won't Escape Us

- ¹ Used
- ² Lost

Wiz-War

Structured Mayhem

► by Aaron Long

The situation looks hopeless: that last treasure you need is far across the board. You cast a spell and rotate the sector of the board you're on, move through the handy Dimensional Warp your opponent had intended for herself and suddenly you're right next to the treasure. But alas, your opponent teleports it into an alcove and creates a wall to seal it off. Apparently out of fire power, she takes off in pursuit of one of your treasures. Do you follow her and engage her while she's weak (or is that a bluff)? Do you figure out a way to free your trapped treasure? Welcome to **Wiz-War**.

Much has been made of *Cosmic Encounter's* role as an inspiration for *Magic: The Gathering*. While perpetually plagued by distribution woes and changing ownership (*Encounter's* current situation is in limbo with the sale of Mayfair Games to Iron Crown Enterprises), *Encounter* managed to become a classic with gamers and game inventors. Another precursor of *Magic* that is much

less well known, though equally worthy, is *Wiz-War* from Jolly Games.

Wiz-War has been the labor of love of game inventor Tom Jolly (see sidebar). The premise of the game, as its title suggests, is battling wizards. Each player controls a wizard within a dungeon and tries to steal treasure from other wizards while preserving his or her own: it's kind of like capture the flag with spells.

Each wizard starts with 15 life points, a hand of seven cards, and two treasures. Winning is accomplished either by securing two treasures (other than your own) on your home base or by killing all the other wizards. If both of your treasures get placed on any opposing wizard's home base, you lose and are out of the game. Play rotates from player to player: on a turn, a player can move, pick up one treasure, and cast spells, limited only by the number of spells in hand and a limit of one attack spell per turn. A player can only carry one treasure at a time, and picking up a treasure immediately ends a player's turn. This makes it tricky to control the fate of more than one treasure.

The cards are the heart of the game, and there are several types: objects, number cards, and spells. Objects such as magical stones and artifacts give players special powers, such as extra movement or extra spell-carrying capacity. Number cards can be used to increase movement or to

augment the power of a spell according to the number on the card. Spells, naturally, comprise the bulk of the deck, and they also fall into three categories: Attack, Counteraction, and Neutral. Attack spells directly impact another player with direct damage, dysfunction, object creation, monster creation, and general annoyance. A good example of this last type is *Thumb of God*, which allows the casting player to flick the four-sided game die at the game board—everything then stays where it lands. Counteraction spells counter Attack spells by reducing and/or preventing damage, creating barriers, or simply hurling the spell right back at the caster. Neutral spells are the most numerous in the game and generally affect the board or temporarily give the caster special abilities. There are also a slew of spells that defy categorization, except in that they all have the potential to make things screwier.

The essence of *Wiz-War* is structured mayhem. Nearly every facet of the game is subject to alteration, destruction, or transmutation. One spell makes you larger and one spell makes you small (and the ones that mother casts don't do anything at all). This can be frustrating as you see your game-winning strategy crumble because your opponent casts *Swap Home Bases* or turns you into stone for four turns.

But really, the anything-can-happen atmosphere is what makes the game great. There are so many spells, especially with the expansion sets, that the combinations are nearly limitless. Every game is different and unpredictable. This is not to say that *Wiz-War* is a game of chance, as strategy is essential to winning. However, it is seat-of-the-pants, on-the-fly strategy that tends to work best. While it is possible to plant something that will come in handy later, like creating a door in a strategic spot, long-term plans tend to be useless as the whole landscape will change before your plans come to fruition.

Like *Cosmic Encounter* and *Magic*, *Wiz-War* is one of those games in which



Chessex
Berkeley, CA

FORMAT

Board game (125 cards, four board sectors, one four-sided die); 2-4 players; playing time 15-45 minutes; price: \$18.

Two previously available expansion sets, due to be available again in the next year, add two more players, two more board sectors, and many more cards.

DESIGN

Tom Jolly

ART

Phil Morrissey

CONTACT

Chessex
2990 San Pablo Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94702
(510) 843-9257
<http://www.chessex.com>



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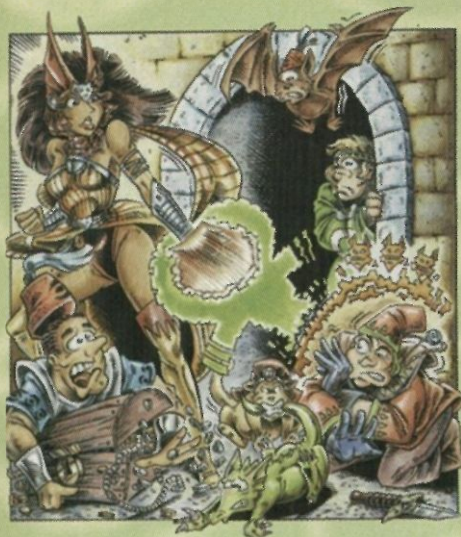
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Wizards
OF THE COAST

it often ain't over when it appears to be. A final trick up one wizard's sleeve results in desperate searches up every other wizard's sleeve, and soon everyone is flailing their arms like the goddess Kali and the game turns out to be only beginning.

As is to be expected in a game where mayhem reigns, rules disputes tend to come up as players invent clever and insidious moves. Tom Jolly has thoughtfully provided a *Wiz-War* rule and card FAQ on his website <<http://www.business.u-net.com/~jollygms/>>, and questions not already addressed there can be emailed directly to him from the site.

The inventiveness and do-it-yourself



feel of *Wiz-War* tends to be infectious. I've personally made a bunch of extra sectors, created new spells, and even constructed a few scenarios to be played within the basic *Wiz-War* milieu. Tom Jolly encourages tinkering with his game, and Chessex sells blank cards so you can add your own spells.

Fans of *Magic* will enjoy *Wiz-War*. The similarities between the games are obvious, but *Wiz-War* is more of a board-based game in which manipulating physical surroundings is half the battle. Warning: *Wiz-War* is highly addictive. The games are short and so entertaining that it seems like there is always time for one more. ■

Aaron Long devotes most of his gaming energy to being a tournament Scrabble player.

An Interview with Tom Jolly

When did you create *Wiz-War*?

Around 1980. The game changed quite a bit from 1980 to 1985, though, so the current version of it wasn't really around until 1985 when it was first published.

When/where/how did you sell the first set?

The first set was sold at a Polycon in 1985. It was in a zip-lock bag, there were only a hundred copies, and I had silk screened the boards myself. I had, before then, tried to sell it to Steve Jackson Games, Eon Products, Midkemia Press, and Mayfair Games. After being rejected, I decided to make it myself.

What inspired the creation of *Wiz-War*?

Numerous sessions of Steve Jackson's "The Fantasy Trip," the precursor to GURPS. I wanted to make a game which was almost roleplaying, but with no Game Master. The only way to do that was to have fixed rules (spells) on the playing cards. Magic was the most fun part of the RPG games I played. I wanted to distill that part of the game and make an independent game out of it.

What games do you currently play?

Computer games. I'm working my way through *The Dig*. I prefer puzzle-solving games to death matches.

What are some of the most effective spell combinations in *Wiz-War*?

I've heard some good ones. One person Dragged an opponent carrying a treasure onto his home base, then did a Drop Object on the opponent to deposit the treasure on his home base and win the game. One cute trick is to create a monster, then enclose it in a dead end with a Create Wall, then use a Teleport Opponent to dump your enemy into the same dead end with the monster.

What's in the future for *Wiz-War*?

Chessex at various times has talked about a deluxe edition of *Wiz-War* with both expansion sets in it and fancy playing cards, and a CCG version of *Wiz-War*, which they dropped with the subsequent glut of CCGs on the market. Neither of these has come to pass for a number of reasons. I'd like to change the spells so that their effects are a little better defined, a lesson I've learned from *Magic: The Gathering*, by putting a little "info" bar on the bottom of each card, but that will have to wait until normal-sized cards are used in a print run.

Do you design alone? Have you ever designed with a partner, or as part of a team? Which do you prefer?

I don't think anyone really designs alone, completely. Playtesters have a lot of influence on how a game is ultimately designed. Two friends, Jeff Smith and Dave Johnson, helped out with the initial version of *Wiz-War* quite a lot when I first designed it, and it's a better game for their insights. Also, if you read the card credits on some of the older *Wiz-War* editions, a lot of the ideas were sent to me by *Wiz-War* players. I think I prefer designing the basic system alone, then getting "fine tuning" ideas from other players.

What's happening with the online version of *Wiz-War*?

Two companies, Total Entertainment Network and Adventure Online Gaming, are working on online versions of *Wiz-War*. I've actually played TEN's version as a beta test, and it's pretty faithful to the board version. However, I'm not sure it will ever actually hit their network. The bulk of the network games are the high-intensity, head-to-head shoot-em-ups that dominate the market right now.

For the complete text of this interview, check out *The Duelist Online* at <<http://www.wizards.com/DuelistOnline/>>

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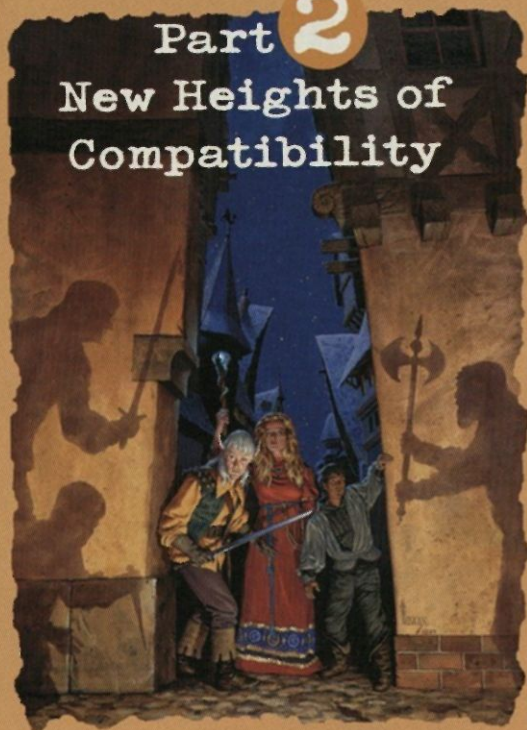


Pulling in the Same Direction

SAGE puts trading cards in your RPG

Part 2

New Heights of Compatibility



The professional relationship between Wizards of the Coast and TSR continues to excite gamers (and remember, "excite" is one of those double-edged words like "interesting" or "fragrant"). As the biggest TCG and RPG companies share office space and begin to plan a future together, the only certainty is that things will change. Each company's roster of games will most likely gain and lose, producing a combined Wizards/TSR catalogue with all of the most popular games from both companies. With both niche leaders under one roof and unified management, the conditions for inter-format crossover have never been better.

However the new Wizards/TSR entity

explores TCG-RPG combinations, competition has already sprung up. Seattle Adventure Games Enterprises (SAGE) has already released its first effort, called *Swords & Spells*. Appropriately, SAGE does not refer to *Swords & Spells* as an RPG, but as a "HI-TAG" (Human Interactive-Team Adventure Game). According to Ian Starcher, the driving force behind SAGE's creative and business efforts, the difference between the two lies in *Swords & Spells*'s tri-pillared foundation of role-playing, trading cards, and computer software.

"[*Swords & Spells*] was designed with the twenty-first-century gamer in mind," says Starcher. "Most of the [roleplaying] games out there are great games, but were designed literally ten, twenty years ago, and are completely oblivious to the use of computers as a utility. And most modern gamers have a background in TCGs, which are very fast paced. When we did our market survey, the repeating problem was that character generation took forever before people could start playing. I wanted to design something that would let people jump right in."

Starcher has admirably realized his goal: the *Swords & Spells* sourcebook also contains pre-generated characters and scenarios, complete with sample games and Game Master's instructions (a Game Master is the HI-TAG equivalent

of a Dungeon Master). As Starcher puts it, "By page three, you're playing the game. Turn to the index, tear out Enric [a pre-generated character], turn back to page three, and follow the instructions. You're lost in the woods, halfway between your home and your destination...what do you do?"

Swords & Spells also comes out of the package with its own character-generation software to get neophytes and experienced campaigners alike playing the game as quickly as possible. The software is a useful tool, but it is not an essential one; players don't need a computer to play *Swords & Spells*. "Our game can be played in the woods," says Starcher, adding, "without electric trees." Once players have become familiar with the system and the character abilities, they can use the sourcebook, the software program, and their own imaginations to lay the groundwork for an intriguing campaign.

Swords & Spells's innovation doesn't stop with character generation, however. The most exciting aspect of the game is that your characters can use **Magic** and **Mythos** (as well as other TCG) cards as part of the overall adventure. In the game world, trading cards are magical objects called "tokens" that your adept character ("token mage") can pick up, carry, and use as needed. **Magic** creatures and spells behave much like they do in the course of a duel: creatures are damage-dealing pawns of the mage that summoned them, and spells can affect virtually any aspect of the game.

by Scott McGough <pinkbird@wizards.com>

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Actions

1. Horrified at accidentally having killed his first attacker, this character offers no further resistance when taken prisoner by mogg raiders.
2. This mistrustful character discovers that she can rely on Hanna when they join forces to defeat a sinister shapeshifter.
3. After a battle between the *Weatherlight* and the *Predator*, Volrath's flying ship, this enraged commander shows displeasure with his first mate by throwing him overboard.
4. This nobleman, believing himself cursed, secretly hopes to find the angel who once protected him and now serves Volrath.
5. Bold and brash, this character leaps onto the *Predator* following the battle and is taken prisoner by Volrath.
6. This reserved character tries to conceal her elation at seeing Gerrard alive when he rescues her from the Skyshroud elves.
7. During a siege in the Death Pits of Rath, this simple-minded character inadvertently protects Gerrard by hugging an artifact he has mistaken for a toy.
8. During a savage duel with Greven *il-Vec*, this commanding character plummets from the deck of the *Weatherlight* into the clouds below.
9. While using his powers to open a magical portal, this character encounters the remnants of three cursed armies caught between dimensions on the Field of Souls.

Characters

- A) Tahngarth
- B) Greven *il-Vec*
- C) Ertai
- D) Karn

- E) Gerrard
- F) Squee
- G) Crovax
- H) Mirri
- I) Hanna

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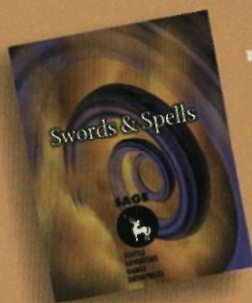
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Pulling in the Same Direction

continued

There are, of course, some logical and narrative restrictions on the use of such cards to preserve the flow of the adventure. Spells resolve or fizzle according to the Game Master's rulings, for example, and while a mage can bring any number of preconstructed decks into an adventure, he or she can only access the cards



"The link between roleplaying and trading card games isn't an either/or situation... Gamers aren't like that."

from one deck at a time. Switching decks in mid-campaign is allowed (again, according to the GM), but you couldn't use a Counterspell from your prison deck and then Fireball someone with direct damage from your burn deck in the same turn. Both mana and skill checks (dice rolls) are required to successfully cast a given spell, but land cards are not required, as each mage has his or her own innate mana to draw upon. This natural mystic energy begins as generic mana, but mages can choose to align themselves with one of the five colors by dedicating themselves to its study. Each color has its own school of thought and practice, and once aligned, mages must physically identify their alignment with a permanent palm tattoo. Two hands mean you can align yourself with two different colors at once, but make sure you choose your alliance carefully; in order to change from one color to another, your mage must literally burn the tattoo off before campaigning for a new one.

"The link between roleplaying and trading card games," says Starcher, "isn't an either/or situation, like Mac versus IBM. Gamers aren't like that. They're human. Someone who has a bunch of cards, has tweaked his deck a hundred

times and beaten all his buddies with it wants something different. Now he can take his cards, create a character that's behind those cards, and start playing him...or not. They can create their own character that has nothing to do with cards, or be a part of a team of people. It's a social experience."

Swords & Spells's flexibility doesn't end with trading cards, either. One of the most difficult challenges for game design-

ers is to develop products that maintain their appeal long after the initial learning curve drops off and players have had an opportunity to thoroughly explore the game. New modules for RPGs and expansion sets for TCGs are the most obvious manifestation of the quest to keep games fresh and exciting, but Swords & Spells offers another method: it has been carefully designed to allow roleplayers to dust off some of their old favorites—RPGs and the characters who explored them—and experience them again in brand new circumstances.

To illustrate this point, Starcher refers to *Tunnels and Trolls*, an "absolutely fabulous solo game" with roughly a few thousand regular players. Once you've purchased all of the related *Tunnels and Trolls* products and have fairly exhausted the possibilities of the adventures therein, he argues, what are you going to do next? The answer is as simple to state as it is difficult to realize: you add something new to the mix. In this case, the "something new" is an RPG or TCG that is familiar to the participants, but completely novel in a different context. Not coincidentally, incorporating other games into the fabric of Swords & Spells also enhances Swords & Spells itself.

Starcher refers to his game's ability to incorporate so many disparate elements into a single game experience as "interoperability." Interoperability may well be the future of gaming as a whole, even if it doesn't follow the Swords & Spells model. Starcher is clearly dedicated and passionate about the social benefits of interactive fun through gaming, but he also understands the demands of the marketplace. Gamers who have invested a great deal of time, money, and effort in their favorite hobby are going to demand a significant return on that investment, or they will look elsewhere. Interoperability allows gamers to maximize the investment they've already made, to find new ways to play their old favorites, and to discover new facets of themselves as gamers. How would the GM allow a pitched battle between two mages, one of Lovecraft's Elder Gods, and a Shivan Dragon to play out? How would a stalwart warrior, an opportunistic thief, or a bloodthirsty werewolf react to such a spectacle? And, assuming at least one mage survived such a conflict, what would his or her next step be?

Once the characters have been generated, the mages have been armed and aligned with their schools, and the adventure has begun, Swords & Spells players enter a vast multiverse of opportunity. Anything and everything they bring to the game, from pre-existing characters to powerful spell cards to entirely new worlds, adds another layer to the basic experience. Limited only by the number of items their characters can carry and the imagination of the GM, experienced roleplayers and TCGers alike will discover that the many bridges built by Swords & Spells's interoperability lead to a lot of new territory that's just waiting to be explored. ■

Scott McGough has Parliament-Funkadelic songs and John Waters dialogue running through his head twenty-four hours a day.

Next Issue: *Legend of the Five Rings* further blurs the distinction by existing simultaneously on both sides of the fence.

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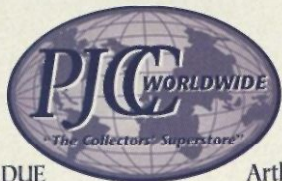
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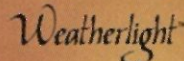
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by Mark Rosewater

MAGIC THE PUZZLING



A Tooth for a Tooth

Your opponent is Tina. You are playing a *Weatherlight* draft. Tina is unaware you have been saving cards, waiting for the moment you can take her out in one big fury of spells. After drawing your card this turn, you decide the time is ripe. It is the beginning of your main phase. Defeat Tina this turn without losing.

DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

CARD HIGHLIGHTS



Lotus Vale
When Lotus Vale comes into play, sacrifice two untapped lands or bury Lotus Vale.

☉: Add three mana of any color to your mana pool.



Spinning Darkness ♣♣♣
You may remove the top three black cards in your graveyard from the game instead of paying Spinning Darkness's casting cost.

Spinning Darkness deals 3 damage to target nonblack creature. Gain 3 life.

Lava Hounds 2♣♣

Lava Hounds is unaffected by summoning sickness.

When Lava Hounds come into play, it deals 4 damage to you.



Urborg Justice ♣♣

Target opponent chooses and buries a number of creatures he or she controls equal to the number of creatures put into your graveyard from play so far this turn.



TINA (WHITE/GREEN)



Benalish Infantry 1/3



Benalish Missionary 1/1



Rogue Elephant 3/3



Plains

YOU (BLACK/RED)



Dingus Staff



Lotus Vale



Bogardan Firefiend 2/1



Abyssal Gatekeeper 1/1

YOUR HAND



Coils of the Medusa +1/-1



Fatal Blow

30 LIFE REMAINING



Fallow Wurm 4/4



Heavy Ballista 2/3



Redwood Treefolk 3/6



Llanowar Behemoth 4/4



Ardent Militia 2/5



Plains



Forest



Forest



Forest



Forest

4 LIFE REMAINING



Swamp (5)



Mountain (4)



Bloodrock Cyclops 3/3



Serrated Biskelion 1/1



Hidden Horror 4/4



Lava Hounds 4/4

STUMPED?
FEAR NOT.

Hints for the two solutionless puzzles can be found on The Duelist website at <http://www.wizards.com>.



Fire Whip



Haunting Misery



Shattered Crypt



Spinning Darkness



Urborg Justice



Do You Believe in Magic?

by Shawn F. Carnes

DIFFICULTY

DIFICULT

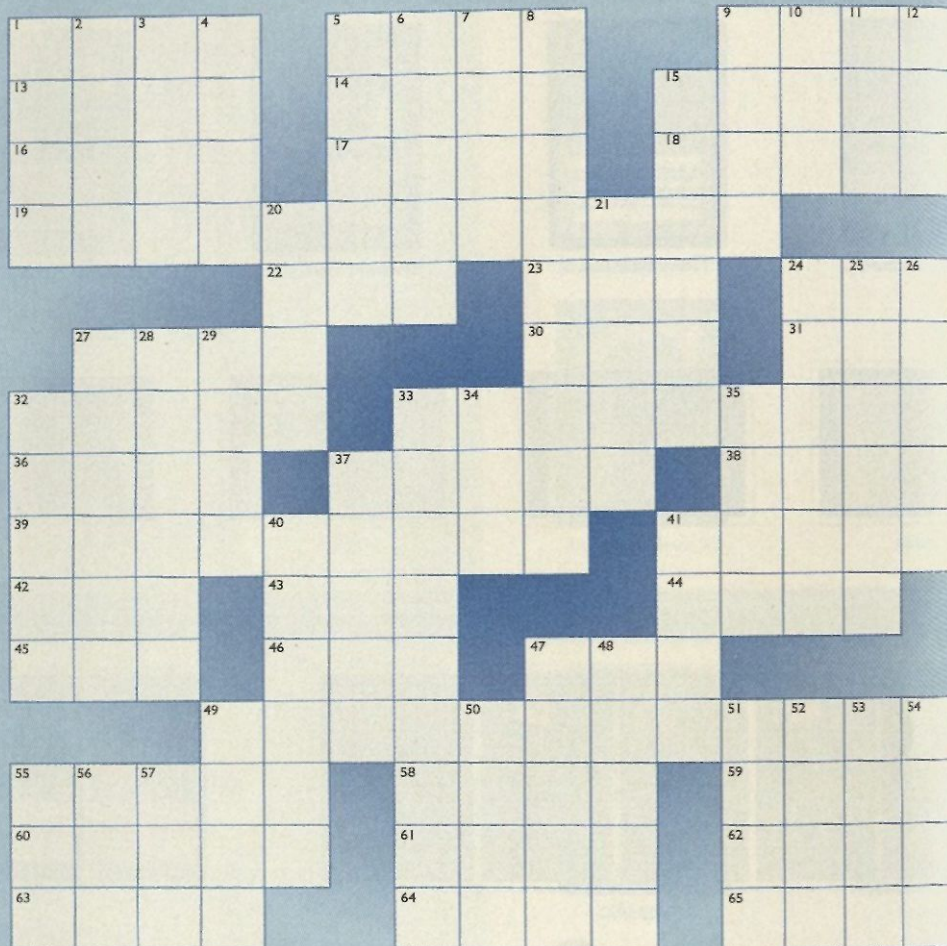
(Magic-related clues are indicated in red.)

ACROSS

1. Killer of Cain
5. Hoax
9. "Hyenas laughing — ___'s the joke?"
13. Pro Tour winner Loconto (nickname)
14. Blood component prefix
15. Pale or striped
16. Poet Pound
17. ___ Talisman
18. More sick
19. This Alpha card appears in the background of a Weatherlight card
22. ___ Spell
23. Musician Brian
24. ___ Na Na
27. Lucas' furry creation
30. Rsv. power
31. ___ Giant
32. Trokair's claim to fame
33. There are two versions of this card's art: one is on a beach, the other at sea
36. Containers for Grecian ashes
37. Gilligan's place in a theater
38. Nirvana's "Been ___" (2 words)
39. Casts Berserk twice?
41. Japanese cartoon
42. Word in both a Djinn and an Enchant World
43. The Ravens are part of it
44. Pro-player Kastle's original surname
45. 1/ 200 of Indy
46. ___—you're it!
47. It turns creatures into farmers (nickname)
49. These creatures are shown to be foaming at the mouth
55. Fasten
58. Russian sea
59. Woodwind
60. Eats less
61. The four-card limit refers to this part of a card
62. Origins sponsor
63. Nettling and Fire
64. Fool
65. Pentagon of the ___

DOWN

1. Actor Guinness
2. Clown
3. Beige
4. Bank debt
5. Cobbler
6. A Stern Magic player
7. Irving and Weber
8. These artifacts are shaped like teardrops. (2 words)
9. Ether ___
10. Clarke's AI
11. "Dreams' riches ___ easily spent."
12. Recent Wizards of the Coast acquisition
15. Mississippi city
20. Brand-name cassettes
21. Accommodate oneself to
24. Deck type: Turbo or Squandered
25. "If it is weak, either kill it or ignore it. Anything else ___ it."
26. Both a Magic novel and card
27. It features the equation "E=mc²" in its artwork
28. Way to make a Clockwork Gnome go (2 words)
29. ___ much as a whim... (2 words)
32. Not urban
33. It changed sexes from Fourth to Fifth Edition (2 words)
34. ___ it or lose it
35. Few have it and eat it
37. "Sweetie, it's Brit comedy!"
40. Magic's first steps
41. Timely convenience store
47. Indian religious teacher
48. For rent (2 words)
49. Plague and Pestilence
50. It can be intentional
51. Short version of R&D codename for Tempest
52. "He's got ___ that's filled with toys." (2 words)
53. Type of artifact that always has a card-drawing mechanic
54. Vodalian Mages bring "devices from across the ___"
55. Reagan's "Star Wars"
56. Creature nickname from Monty Python and the Holy Grail
57. Congressman (abbreviation)



What Happened Was...

DIFFICULTY
NASTY

While walking through the gaming room at a convention, you notice a Classic (Type I) Magic game in progress, but the players are not around. You learn that the duel had just begun and each player had only taken one turn. Knowing that an *Arabian Nights* card was used and that no shuffling occurred, can you figure out exactly what happened on each player's turn?

CARD HIGHLIGHTS

Mana Vault



Mana Vault does not untap during your untap phase. At the end of your upkeep, if Mana Vault is tapped, it deals 1 damage to you.

4: Untap Mana Vault at end of upkeep. Use this ability only during your upkeep.
☉: Add three colorless mana to your mana pool. Play this ability as a mana source.

Orcish Lumberjack



☉: Sacrifice a forest to add three mana in any combination of red and/or green to your mana pool. Play this ability as an interrupt.

KAREN'S HAND (6 CARDS)



KAREN

20 LIFE REMAINING



Tundra

DARREN

56 LIFE REMAINING



Mox Jet



Mox Emerald



Mox Ruby



Concordant Crossroads



Mana Vault



Sol Ring



Orcish Lumberjack 1/1

DARREN'S HAND (0 CARDS)

7 CARDS IN GRAVEYARD
1 CARD REMOVED FROM GAME

E M P T Y

*Step-by-step
solutions to last
issue's "Magic:
The Puzzling"*

by Mark Rosewater

Six months, a hijacked plane, a deserted tropical island, and a pirate ship later, I finally set foot in Sri Lanka. My goal: to find Leah, my long-lost fiancée whose supposed death I had been framed for on the day of our wedding. It hadn't been the best of years. After weeks of searching, I got the lead I needed from a door-to-door platypus salesman. Finally, I found her. I had so many questions. What had really happened that day? Who was ultimately responsible? Why was she pointing a gun at me? But before I reveal the answers to these questions, why don't I take a moment to answer a few questions from last month's column.

MAGIC TRICKS



Live Long and Prosper

Published in *Duelist* #18, p. 106

The goal of this puzzle is rather simple to deduce, since the Prosperous-Bloom deck tends to defeat the opponent in only one way. You need to build up enough mana to cast a 17-point Drain Life.

During your main phase:

- 1) Tap three swamps, an island, two forests, and Undiscovered Paradise to add three black (two used as generic), two blue, and two green mana to your mana pool.
- 2) Use one blue and one colorless mana to cast Impulse. Draw Emerald Charm, a forest, Drain Life, and Memory Lapse. Keep the Emerald Charm and put the remaining three cards (in any order) on the bottom of your library. Impulse is critical to starting the momentum of the deck and getting closer to the crucial cards in your library. Emerald Charm will let you get an additional blue mana.
- 3) Use one green mana to cast Emerald Charm and untap Undiscovered Paradise.
- 4) Tap Undiscovered Paradise to add one blue mana to your mana pool. You now have two black, two blue, and one green mana in your mana pool.
- 5) Use two blue and one generic mana to cast Three Wishes. Draw Squandered Resources, Cadaverous Bloom, and Natural Balance and set them aside. You may now play these cards

as though they were in your hand.

- 6) Use one black and one green mana to cast Squandered Resources. As with any Prosperous-Bloom deck, Squandered Resources is needed to jumpstart the cycle.
- 7) Sacrifice all your lands in play (three swamps, one island, two forests, and Undiscovered Paradise) to Squandered Resources to add three black, two blue (used as generic), and two green mana to your mana pool.
- 8) Use two green and two generic mana to cast Natural Balance. Remove three swamps and a forest from your library and put them into play. Reshuffle your remaining four cards. The Squandered Resources-Natural Balance trick is also crucial to all Prosperous-Bloom decks.
- 9) Tap and sacrifice all four lands to Squandered Resources to add six black (three used as generic) and two green (one used as generic) mana to your mana pool. You now have nine black and two green mana in your pool.
- 10) Use one black, one green, and three generic mana to cast Cadaverous Bloom.
- 11) Use three black mana and lose half

- your life (that is, 1 life) to cast *Infernal Contract*. Draw *Drain Life*, an island, *Memory Lapse*, and *Prosperity*. You are now at 1 life.
- Discard everything in your hand except *Drain Life* (*City of Solitude*, both *Memory Lapses*, *Power Sink*, *Prosperity*, the island, *Vampiric Tutor*, and *Wall of Roots*) to add sixteen black mana to your mana pool. You now have nineteen black mana in your mana pool.
 - Use nineteen black (one used as generic) mana to cast a 17-point *Drain Life* on your opponent. You are at 18 life and win the game.

Piece By Piece

Published in *Duelist* #18, p. 108

The key to solving this puzzle is realizing that since every card must be used, every card has a particular purpose. The *Flashfires* and *Magical Hack*, for example, can only be used to kill the *Sea Serpent*.

- Cast *Flashfires*. Interrupt the casting with *Magical Hack* and make the *Flashfires* destroy all islands. This will destroy the *Sea Serpent*.
- Cast *Lightning Bolt* on *Brass Man*, destroying it.
- Cast *Transmutation* on *The Wretched*, making it a 5/2 creature.
- Cast *Enfeeblement* on *The Wretched*, reducing its toughness to 0 and killing it.
- Cast *Blood Lust* on *Wall of Light*, making it a 5/1 creature.
- Cast *Jump* to make *Wall of Light* fly.
- Cast *Spirit Shackle* on *Mahamoti Djinn*.
- Cast *Winter Blast* on *Wall of Light* and *Mahamoti Djinn*. This will tap both of them (giving the Djinn a 0/-2 counter because of *Spirit Shackle*) and do 2 points of damage to both. This

kills *Wall of Light*.

- Cast *Twiddle* to untap the *Mahamoti Djinn*.
- Cast *Terror* on the *Mahamoti Djinn*. Then interrupt the spell with *Sleight of Mind* changing the word "black" in "nonblack" to another color. Then interrupt the *Sleight* with *Deflection*, picking the *Infernal Denizen* as the target. The *Sleighted Terror* will now work on the *Infernal Denizen*, killing it.
- Cast *Paralyze* on *Mahamoti Djinn*, which taps it and gives it another 0/-2 counter from the *Spirit Shackle*, killing it.



Best Defense

Published in *Duelist* #18, p. 109

The key to solving this puzzle is recognizing that *Mishra's Factory* can be tapped for mana after it is turned into an *Assembly Worker* and assigned to block a creature.

Jo Ann's turn:

- Tap the plains and the forest with *Wild Growth* to add one white and two green mana (used as generic) to your mana pool.
- Use two generic mana to turn both *Mishra's Factorys* into 2/2 *Assembly Workers*.

- Declare blockers: one *Assembly Worker* blocks the *Drudge Skeletons*; the other *Assembly Worker* blocks the *Shimian Night Stalker*; the *Durkwood Boars* blocks the *Beasts of Bogardan* with *Unholy Strength*.
- After blocking is declared, tap both *Mishra's Factorys* to add +1/+1 to the *Mishra's Factory* blocking the *Shimian Night Stalker*. This will make it a 4/4 tapped creature, which will do no harm to the *Stalker* but will still block it.
- Also after blocking is declared, use the one white mana to cast *Swords to Plowshares* on your 4/4 *Assembly Worker* and gain 4 life. You are now at 5 life.

You want to *Swords* your temporarily 4/4 *Assembly Worker* and not your *Durkwood Boars*. The *Boars* will retain their 4/4 power and toughness, which allows you to do the full damage you need next turn.

- Allow the attack to finish. The *Scathe Zombies* will deal 4 damage (2 from the *Zombies*, 1 extra for *Bad Moon*, and 1 extra for *Orcish Oriflamme*). You are now at 1 life.

Your turn:

- Tap the *Wild Growth* with forest to add two green mana to your mana pool.
- Use one green mana to cast *Giant Growth* on your *Durkwood Boars*, making it a 7/7 creature until end of turn.
- Use one green mana to cast *Instill Energy* on your *Durkwood Boars*. (This is done simply to avoid mana burn.)
- Attack with your 7/7 *Boars*. *Jo Ann* is reduced to 0 life.

It appears I've run out of space for this issue. Join me next time and I'll fill you in on what to do when a long-lost love pulls a loaded revolver on you. Until then, happy puzzling. *

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

by Richard Garfield



You Really Can't Win Them All

Determining if a game is more luck than skill is an exercise game critics and players often engage in. This is even important in law: there are many places where you can play games of skill for money, but doing so with games of luck is gambling, and so is kept in the capable hands of the state.

I'D RATHER BE LUCKY THAN SKILLFUL

I believe that the standard dichotomy of luck versus skill is misleading. This comparison implies that the more luck there is, the less skill and vice versa. To me, this is not at all true. The reward for skill depends on how much luck there is in a game, but a game that is mostly determined by luck can have an enormous amount of skill.

A couple of examples will demonstrate this. The first is *rando-chess*, which is played as standard chess, but after each turn you roll two dice. Roll 12 and you win! This game has as much skill as chess, but also a lot more luck and much less reward for skill. The second example is *pikanumber*, in which each player holds out a number of fingers; whoever holds out more wins. There isn't any luck in this game and not much skill, but there is a very high reward for what little skill there is—you never lose. Skillful players will always draw (unless one has more fingers than the other).

The amounts of skill and luck in a game are unrelated, though they have a related influence on the game's outcome. If you want to minimize luck, you should play the game as many times as possible. A rank beginner has a good chance of beating anyone in a single hand of poker.

But string the hands into sessions and the sessions into seasons of poker, and the more skillful player will consistently win.

I PLAYED THE LOTTERY 10,000,000 TIMES AND FINALLY GOT LUCKY!

When it struck me that there was luck in rock-paper-scissors, I changed my way of thinking about it. As a child I had assumed it was a game of pure skill because the outcome was entirely determined by the players. Then I learned the strategy that can't be taken advantage of: choose randomly,



If I cannot predict the outcome with certainty, then there is luck involved.

giving each move equal weight.

There are any number of ways to choose moves randomly. I could roll dice; use the second hand of my watch as a random number generator; think of a word and count the letters in it; or try to reach a mental state in which I am a random-move generator. Even if there is not actually true randomness, it appears that way to the other player. My opponent might be able to take advantage of patterns in my play, but can't be sure of what I am going to do in a particular game. Tracking the flow of a mind is no easier than pre-

dicting the path of a set of dice.

This leads me to a utilitarian definition of luck. If I cannot predict the outcome with certainty, then there is luck involved—even if I find a reason for losing after the fact. The other players planned to team up. The dice were weighted. The cards came up in the wrong order. Whatever the situation, the truly skillful player attempts to judge probability and payoff as best he or she can, and plays accordingly.

This means that by my definition there is no luck in tic-tac-toe between people who know the game. Unless a player is hopelessly distracted, the game will always end in a draw. It also means that there is luck in chess. When I play someone of comparable skill, no one can predict the outcome for certain. Against a more skilled player—even Kasparov—I could blindly walk into a superior line of play, not realizing the long-term implications of my moves.

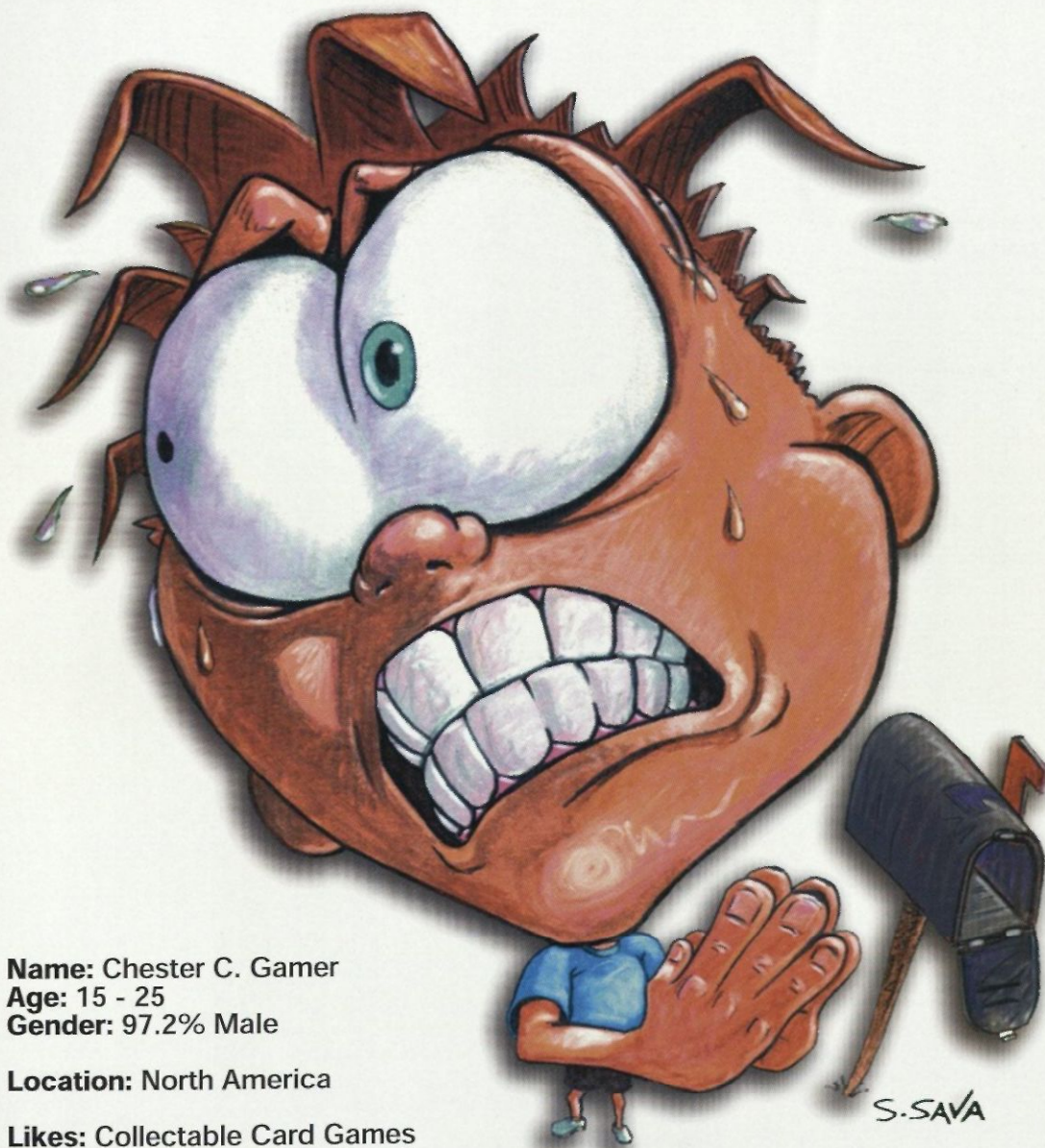
In chess both players are exploring a game tree that neither fully knows, making moves they believe lead to favorable branches. Even if one player can see further than the other along the game tree, there is a chance for the other player. The only way chess can have no luck is if it is fully understood, like tic-tac-toe, a sterile and dead game.

Hence, any game whose outcome is not a foregone conclusion has a degree of luck. Chess and basketball allow skill to influence that luck a great deal. Roulette and slot machines allow little or no influence on that luck. But if you ever manage to reduce the luck to zero, then you have killed the game. ♣

Richard Garfield is working on a new way to marry skill and luck with "Frisbee Bingo."

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